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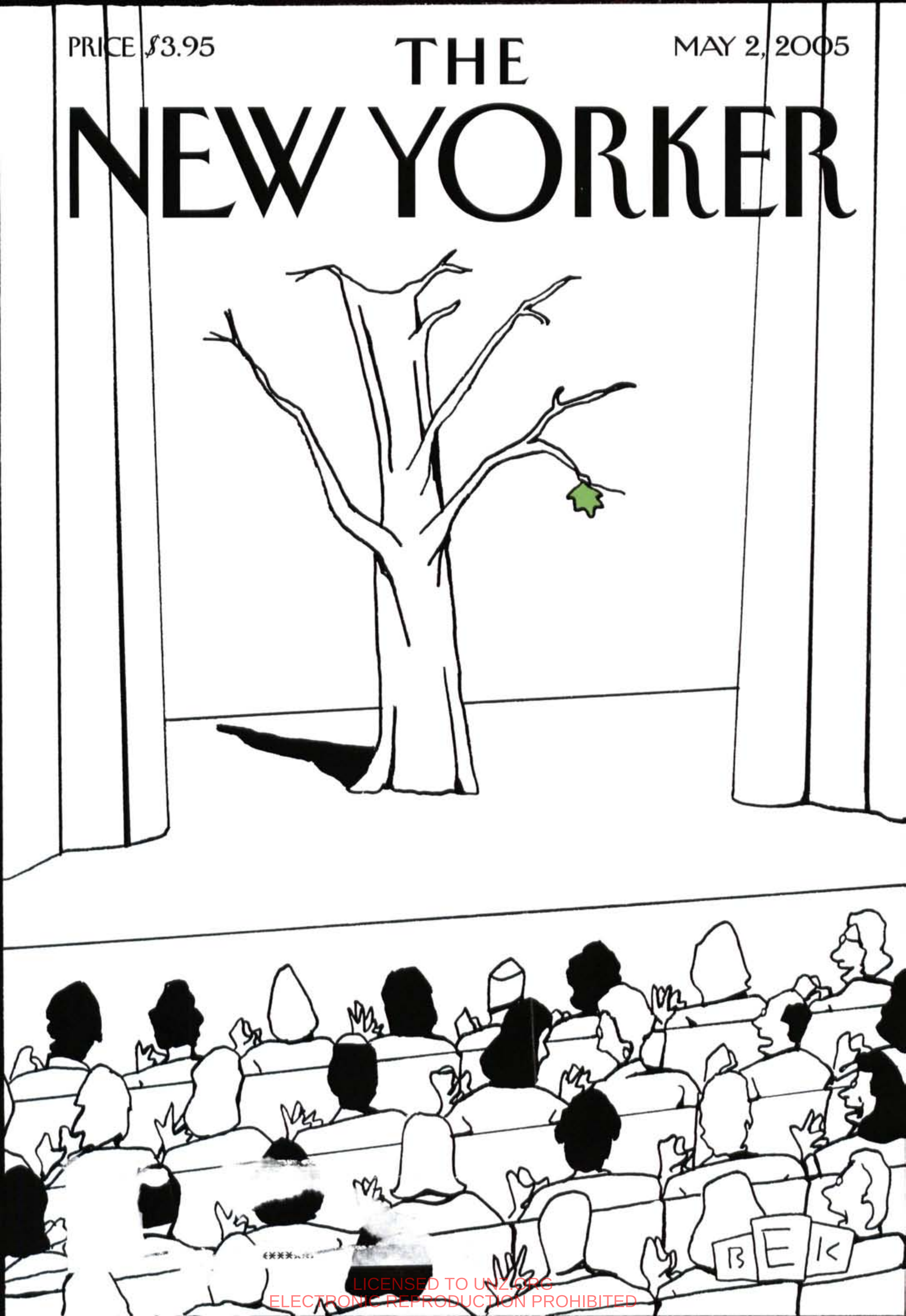

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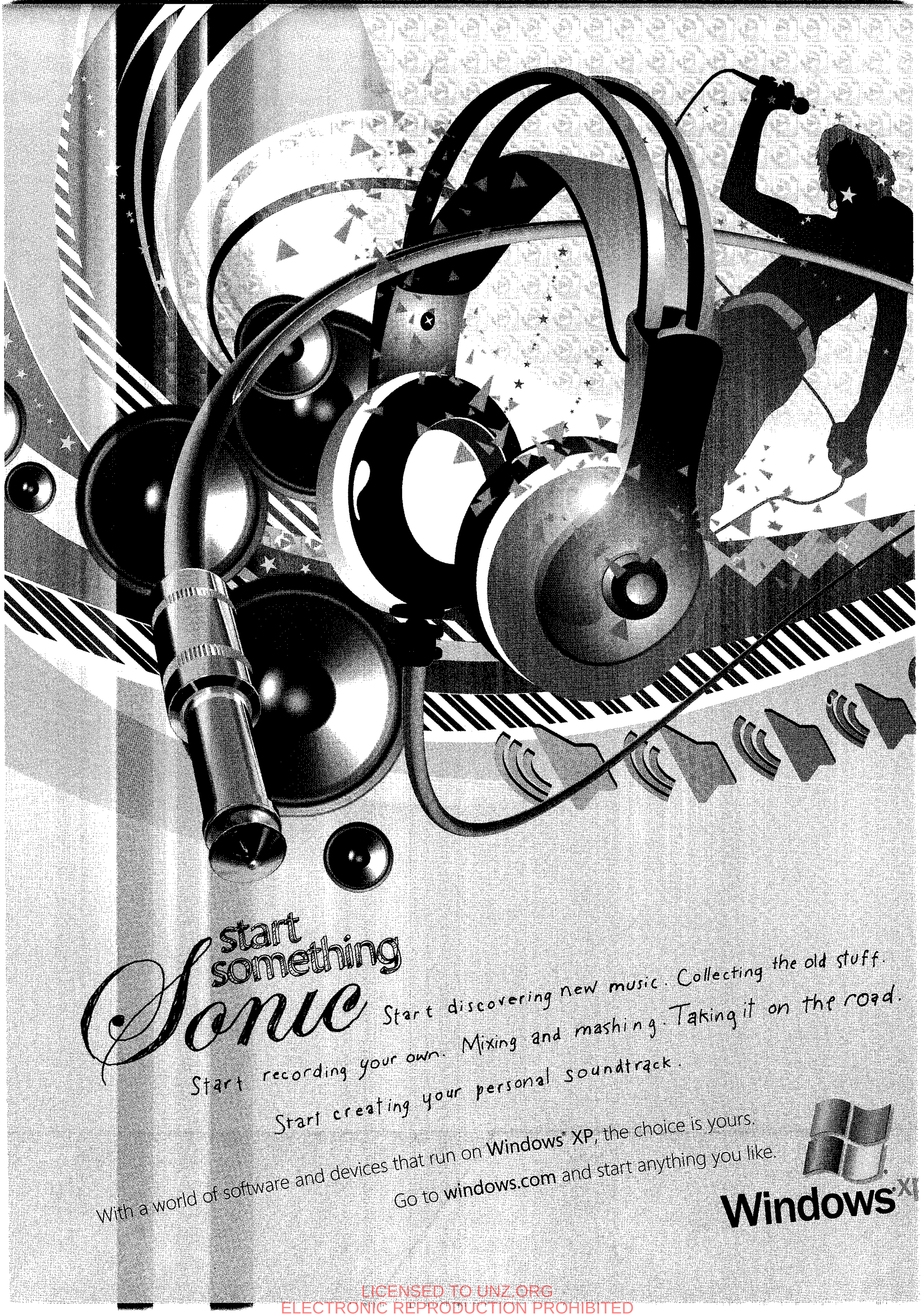

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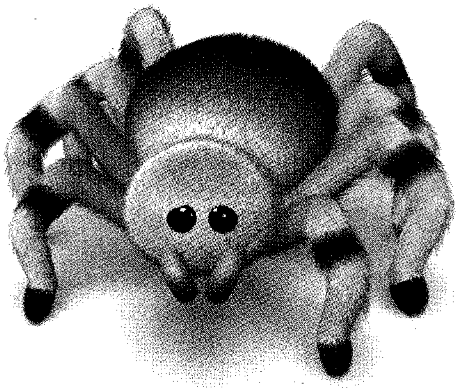

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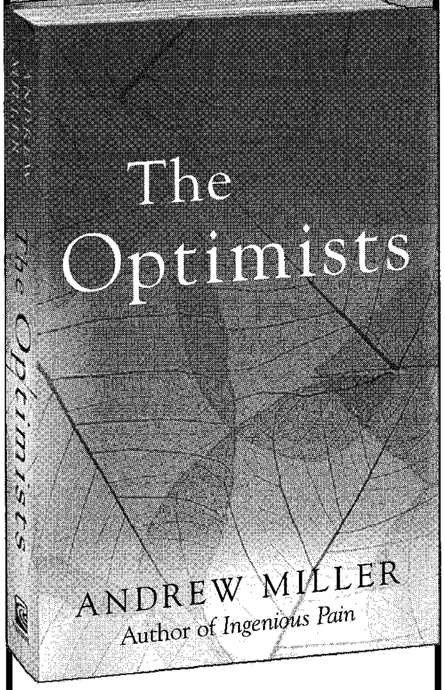

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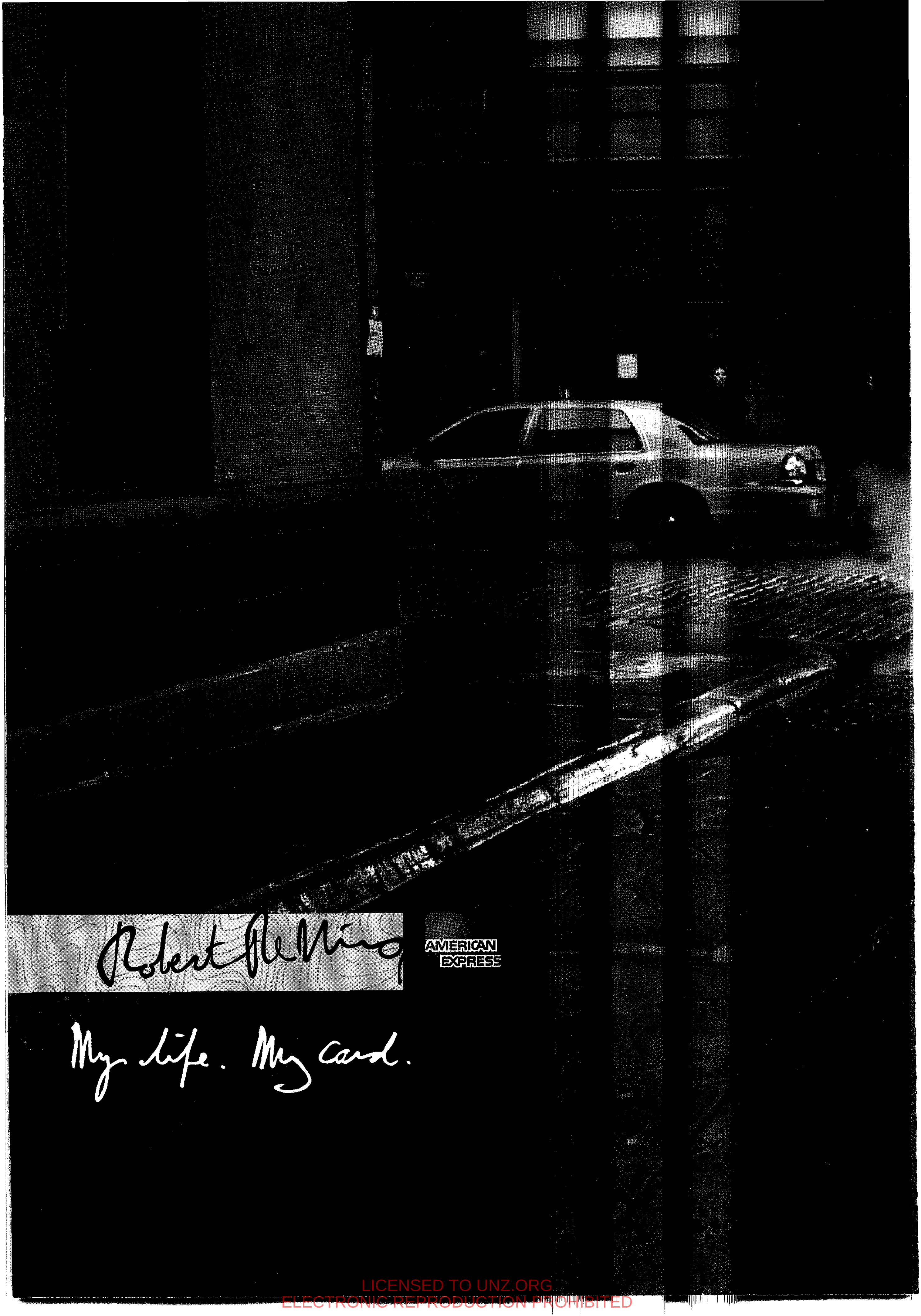
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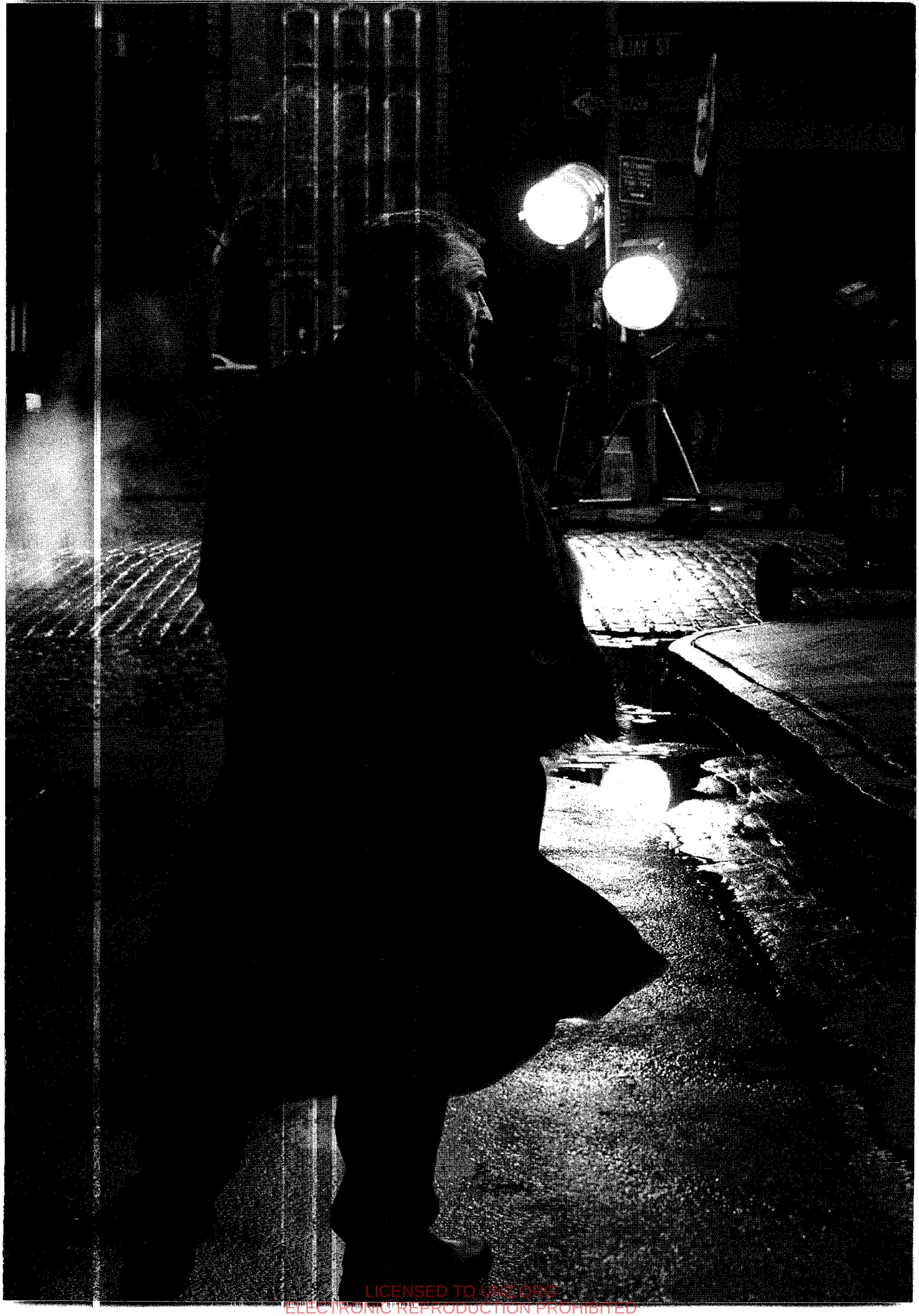

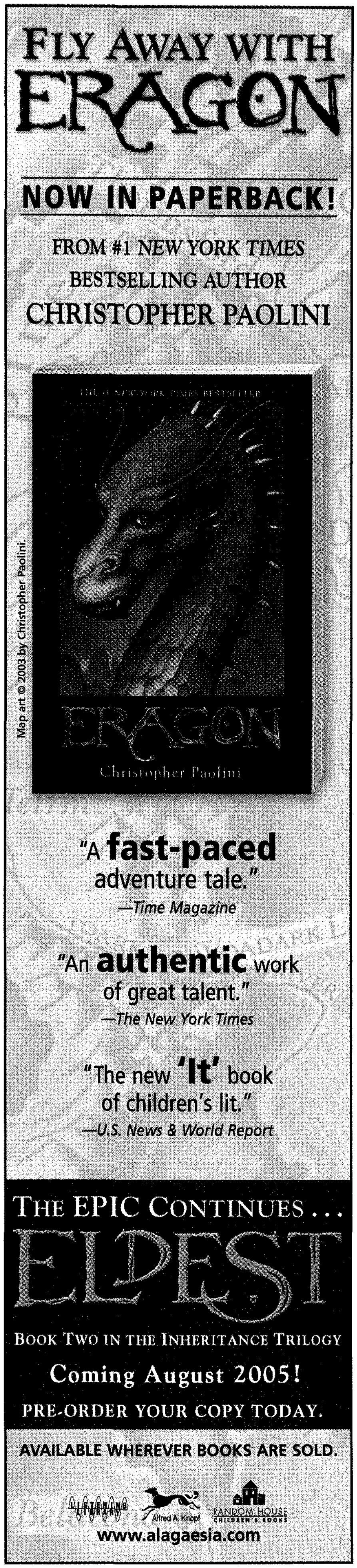

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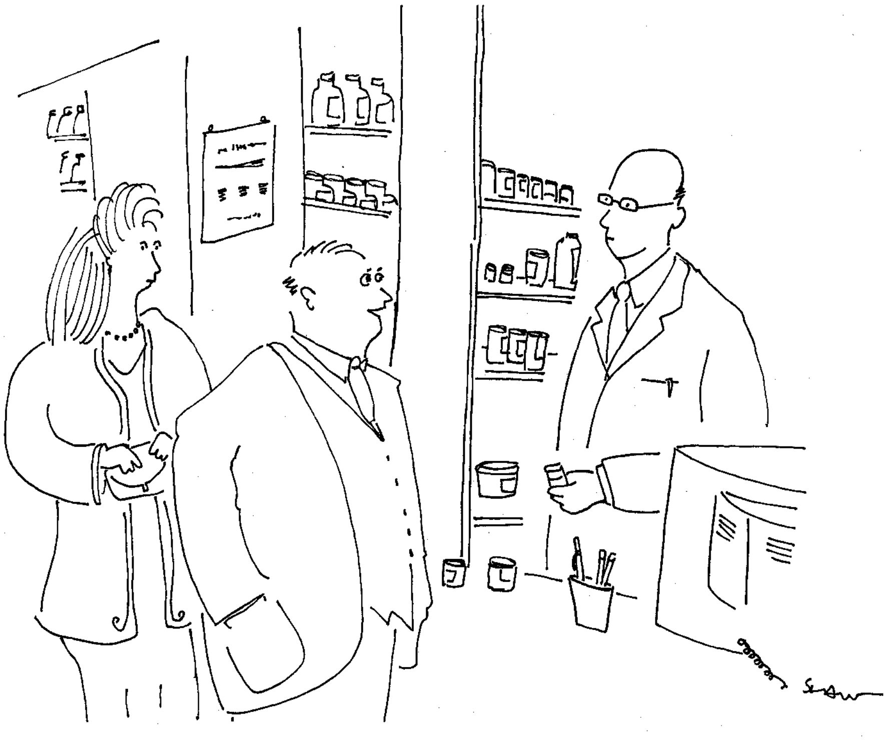

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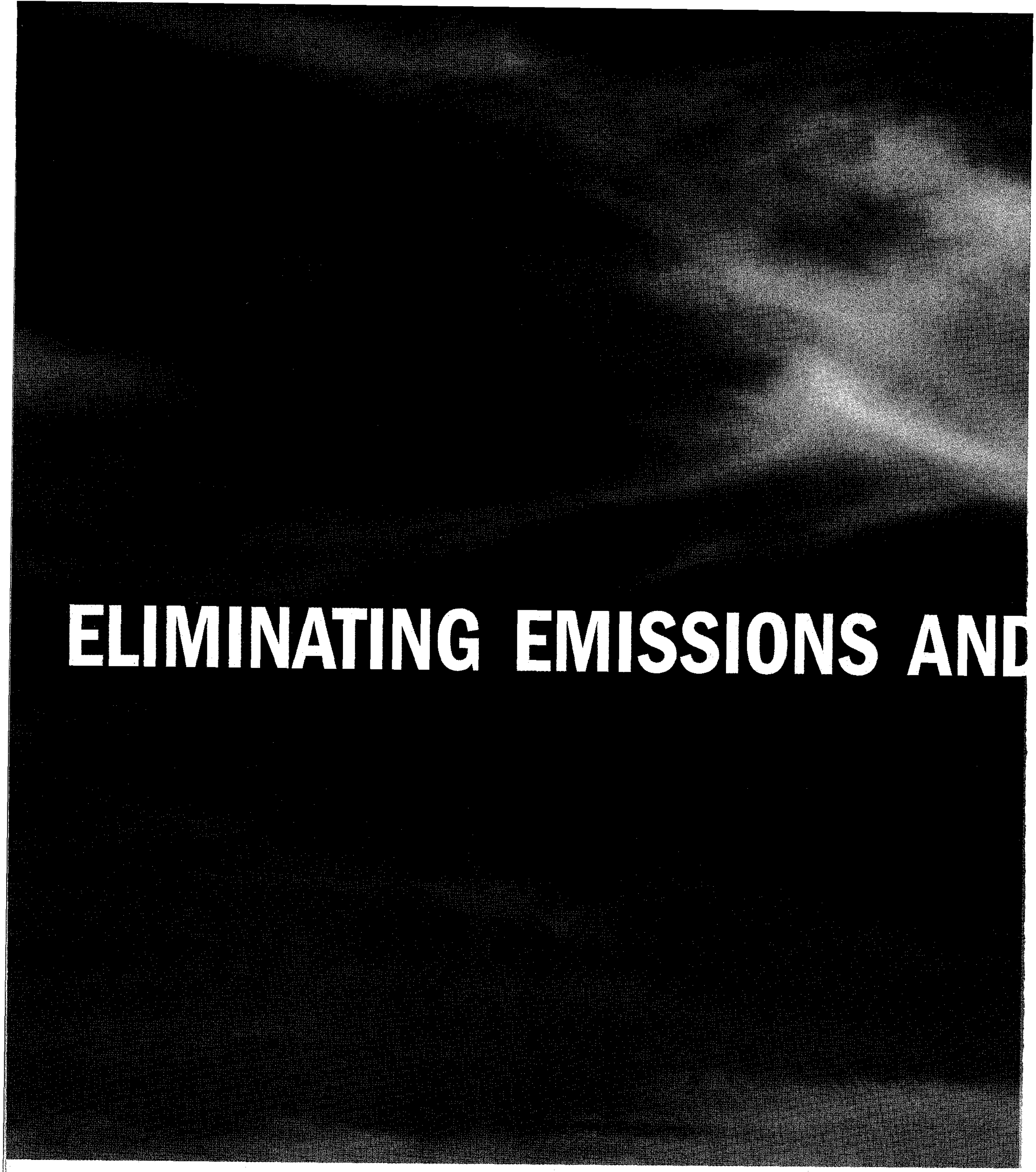

Someone should make hydrogen vehicles and their refueling stations a reality. Only GM could. Only General Motors has teamed up with Shell to introduce the nation's first hydrogen refueling pump at a retail station. It's the endgame of a multi-faceted strategy GM set in motion years ago to make cleaner cars and trucks powered by hydrogen. Right now, a test fleet of hydrogen-powered GM vehicles

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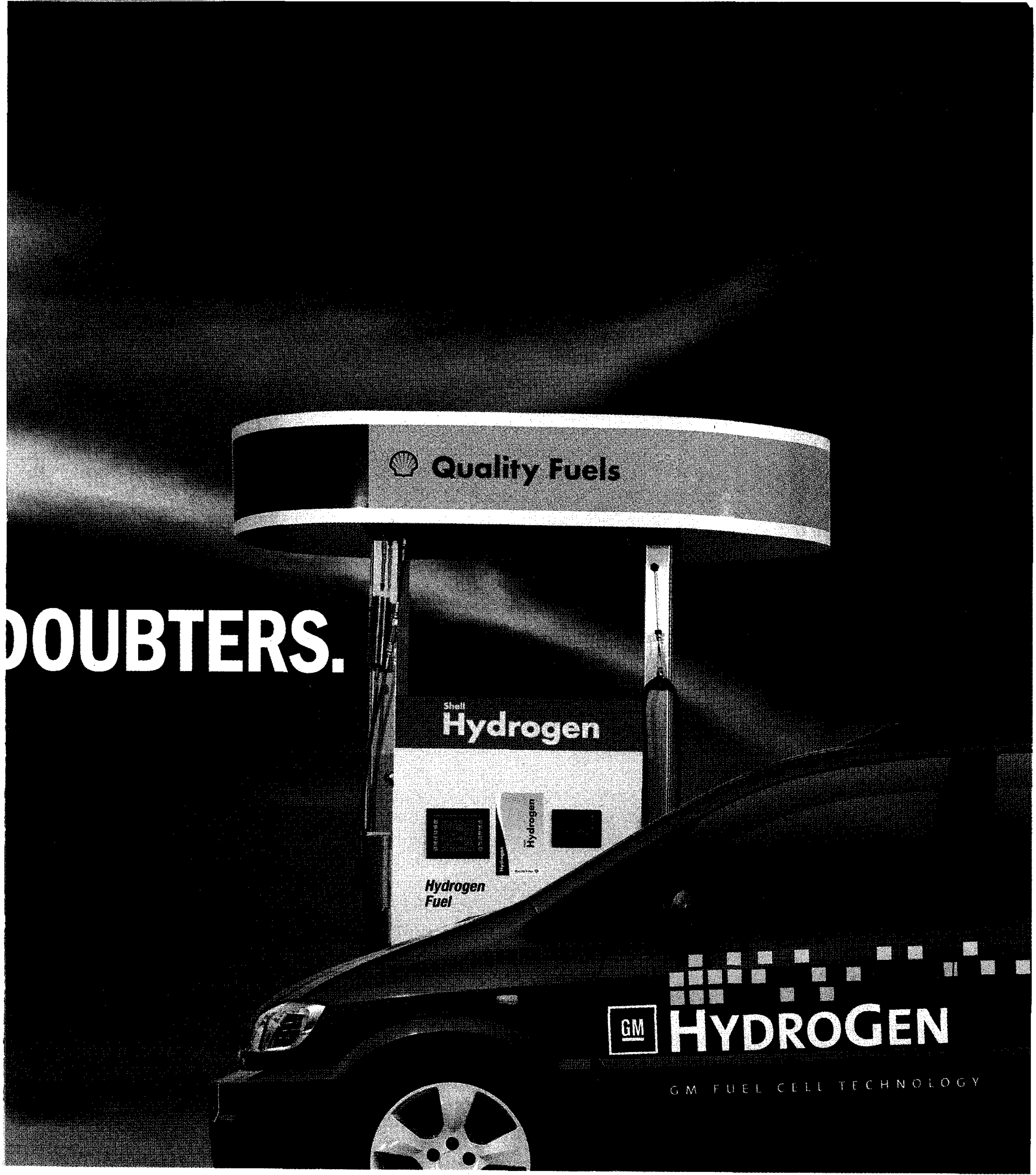
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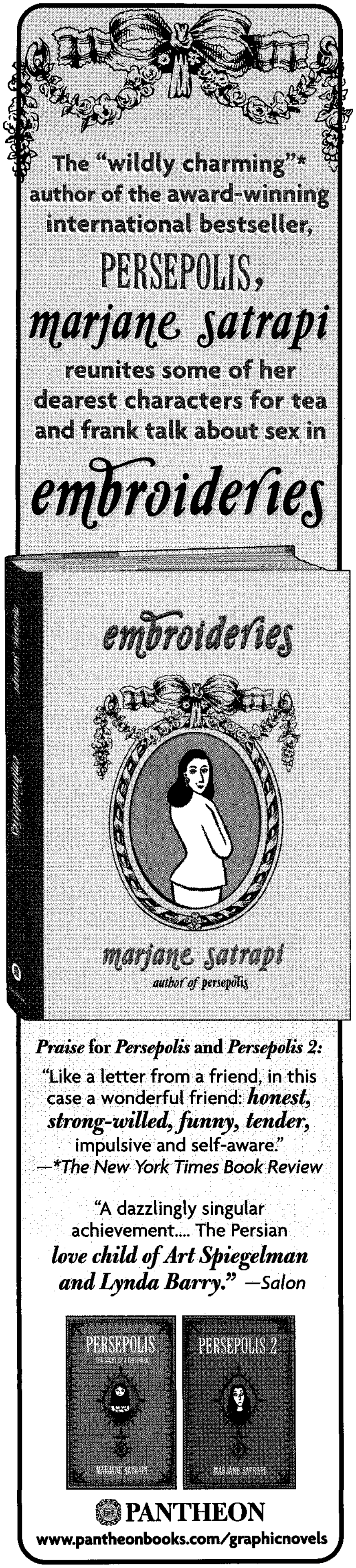
The "wildly charming"* author of the award-winning international bestseller, PERSEPOLIS, **marjane satrapi** reunites some of her dearest characters for tea and frank talk about sex in **embroideries**

Praise* for *Persepolis* and *Persepolis 2:

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—**The New York Times Book Review*

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PRICING HEALTH

Atul Gawande's article on the payment of doctors highlights many anomalies in the relationship between money and medicine ("Piecework," April 4th). But perhaps the largest question of all is exactly what the United States gets in return for spending $1.8 trillion—15.4 per cent of its wealth—on health care each year. Compared with all other countries, the U.S. spends by far the most money per capita on health care—$4,887 in 2001. Canada spent only $2,792 per person per year, but Canadians manage to live an average of two and a half years longer than we do. Our neighbors in Cuba can expect to live about as long as we do, while spending just $229 a year on health care for each person. It is clear that Americans are buying many things from doctors and the medical industry, but good health may not be one of them.

Andrew Bryant
Seattle, Wash.

Gawande's account of medicine's money problem sheds light on some mysteries of health-care costs and billing by private insurers in the United States. Although many major health-insurance companies are "nonprofit," information on how much they charge for services is often considered proprietary and is not necessarily available to the public (unless you have had a specific procedure yourself and have seen the bill). In contrast, cost data on Medicare or Medicaid are public information and are readily accessible for research. Competition to lower prices and improve quality can occur only if prices for goods or services are known; the lack of transparency in the private sector impedes our ability to reform health care.

Wendi J. Dick
Littleton, Colo.

To Gawande's observations about physicians' salaries it is worth adding that, although much of the burden on our health-care system comes from the unhealthy life styles of Americans, physicians who provide preventive care are much less well compensated than those who undertake major procedures for serious yet preventable cardiovascular diseases or malignancies. A physician who spends forty-five minutes with a patient, providing preventive health-care services (Pap smears, smoking-cessation programs, diet and exercise counselling) has the potential to create billions in annual net savings but works within a system that undervalues his contribution. By comparison, heroic measures to bypass obstructed coronary vessels or debulk invasive lung cancers pay out a great deal.

Frank Tu, M.D., M.P.H.
Feinberg School of Medicine of
Northwestern University
Evanston, Ill.

HAPPY CAMPERS

We read Nicole Krauss's recent memoir of her stay, when she was ten, at Camp Fernwood with mounting dismay ("My Summer in Poland," April 18th). Evidently, she did not much enjoy her time with us, but we feel we should point out that, from its founding, in 1921, by Dr. and Mrs. Julius Bluhm, Fernwood has been guided by four basic principles—promoting tolerance, nurturing unselfishness, living simply in the out-of-doors, and, above all, making lifelong friends. Thus, while we found much of Krauss's essay to be hurtful and inaccurate, it has been a catalyst for our more than three thousand happy alumnae to reconnect with old friends and remember the positive influence that Fernwood had on their youth. In the great Fernwood tradition, we have chosen to try to make a sour situation sweet, by making lemonade out of these lemons.

Maxine B. King, Fritz Seving, and
Christine Seving
Directors, Camp Fernwood
Poland, Me.

•

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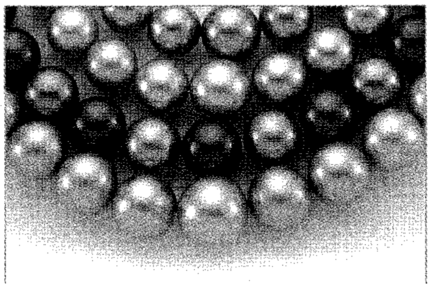

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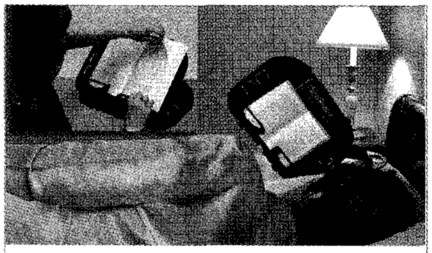

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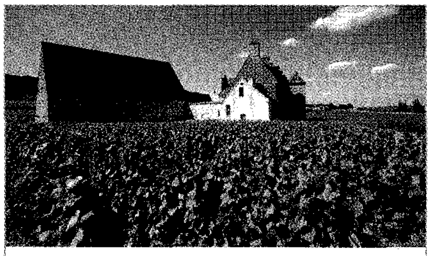

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Jock Soto and Darci Kistler, dancers with New York City Ballet, in rehearsal. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
PIAZZA TALE

Craig Lucas (who wrote the book) and Adam Guettel (who wrote the music) are the forces behind "The Light in the Piazza," a new musical based on Elizabeth Spencer's novella about a mentally challenged young woman who embarks on a love affair in Florence. (See page 18.)

NIGHT LIFE
XYLOPHONE DAYS

Arguably the largest festival of its kind in the world, the two-day African Xylophone Festival includes concerts, workshops, and more. Highlights include the balaphonist Famoro Dioubate, the drummer Bernard Woma, and a twenty-one-log *embaire* xylophone from Uganda, an instrument so large that it requires six musicians to play it. Also participating will be the St. Ann's African Xylophone Ensemble of Brooklyn, composed entirely of second and third graders. (See page 22.)

ART
JULIAN SCHNABEL

Schnabel's energies have not exactly been focussed on painting in recent years—he has made a pair of acclaimed films ("Basquiat" and "Before Night Falls"), and a photograph of him in the catalogue for this retrospective shows him surfing. But the large canvases collected at C&M, painted between 1978 and 2001, represent the best (and worst) of eighties art. (See page 24.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
AT THE SYMPHONY

This week, the New York Philharmonic offers a program featuring the music of two twentieth-century giants, Shostakovich and Prokofiev. Both composers' First Piano Concertos will be presented, along with other works, by two contemporary giants, the pianist Martha Argerich and the conductor Mstislav Rostropovich. (See page 28.)

READINGS AND TALKS
ISLAMIC FICTION

The "Selected Shorts" series presents actors and actresses reading works by Islamic authors, including the Iranian novelist Kader Abdolah and the Indian short-story writer Saadat Hasan Manto. (See page 36.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ENCORE! ENCORE!

Broadway is revival-mad this spring. In chancy economic times, wheeling out warhorses guarantees a certain audience. It helps if a play has stars who are known onscreen as well as onstage—Alan Alda, Natasha Richardson, and Kathleen Turner are all acting in the present season—and it helps even more if a play has been a hit film. Indeed, the chief thing that sets the current revivals of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "On Golden Pond" apart from their screen ancestors—both of which were Oscar-winning movies—is the absence of camera angles. Anthony Page and Leonard Foglia, the shows' respective directors, deviate little from the film versions, and the actors mostly impersonate the movie stars. Many theatregoers prefer it that way; they see a play not to think but to remember the first time they saw a show. But David Leveaux's daring staging of Tennessee Williams's "The Glass Menagerie" challenges the audience by exploring the playwright's characters in new ways: Laura clings to her brother, Tom, like a lover, not a sister. Leveaux has taken a risk that produces dramatic tension, showing that a revival need not be an embalming.

LAURIE ROSENWALD/PHOTOFEST

—Hilton Als

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AFTER THE NIGHT AND THE MUSIC
A new work by Elaine May, about life in the new millennium, stars Jeanne Berlin and J. Smith-Cameron. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. Previews begin April 28. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

BEAST ON THE MOON
Omar Metwally stars in the U.S. première of a play by Richard Kalinoski, about a couple who move to America after surviving the Armenian genocide. Opens April 27 at 8. (Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

CHANTECLER
Adhesive Theatre Project presents Edmond Rostand's fable about a vainglorious rooster, using masks, puppets, and original music by Joel Griffin. Directed by Cory Einbinder. Previews begin April 28. Opens May 1 at 5. (Teatro La Tea, Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. 212-353-3101.)

CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG
A musical based on Roald Dahl's film adaptation of the popular children's book by Ian Fleming. Two previews on April 27. Opens April 28 at 6:30. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS
Alan Alda and Liev Schreiber star in a revival of David Mamet's Pulitzer Prize-winning play. Directed by Joe Mantello. In previews. Opens May 1 at 7. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MEMORY HOUSE
Dianne Wiest stars in a new play by Kathleen Tolan, about a woman whose college-bound adopted daughter confronts her about the ethics of international adoption. David Esbjornson directs. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

SCORE
Leonard Bernstein's passionate relationship to music is explored in a new play conceived and directed by Anne Bogart, adapted by Jocelyn Clarke, and created by SITI Company. In previews. Opens May 1 at 2. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

SWEET CHARITY
A revival of the musical from 1966 about a good-natured prostitute (modelled on the heroine of Fellini's "Nights of Cabiria") stars Christina Applegate. Directed by Walter Bobbie. In previews. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THEATRE OF THE NEW EAR
Two new one-act radio plays, one written by Joel and Ethan Coen, the other by Charlie Kaufman, and both with original scores by Carter Burwell, star Steve Buscemi, Hope Davis, Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and others. With a live band, conducted by Burwell, and onstage Foley artists. April 28-30 at 8. (Arts at St. Ann's, 38 Water St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
William Finn and Rachel Sheinkin's satisfying musical comedy has moved to Broadway. In previews. Opens May 2 at 6:45. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

ALL WEAR BOWLERS
The physical comedians Geoff Sobelle (of Pig Iron Theatre Company) and Trey Lyford (of The Civilians) portray Buster Keaton-style clowns in this tender experiment in anachronism, in which a pair of bowler-hatted hobos stumble out of a black-and-white film and onto a stage—which alternately dismays and convulses them. Their interaction with each other, with the audience, and with Michael Glass's delicate film produces both vaudevillian gags and moments of existential poignance. Nimbly directed by Aleksandra Wolska. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

THE BAKER'S WIFE
Stephen Schwartz's 1976 musical—which is based on a Marcel Pagnol film and never quite made it to Broadway—is set in an idyllic southern French town, where the villagers must cope with a cuckolded breadmaker (Lenny Wolpe) who has lost his will to bake. Alice Ripley ("Side Show"), as the straying wife, emerges from the bright provincial scenery to belt "Meadowlark," the show's ode to abandonment, which is now a cabaret standard. But this moment aside, the production is low on drama and high on over-pretty décor. (Paper Mill Playhouse, Brookside Dr., Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

THE BEAUTY INSIDE
Life changes for Devrim (Jennifer Gibbs), a privileged young lawyer in Istanbul, when she takes on the case of a rural Muslim girl (Tatiana Gomberg) who escaped an attempted honor killing by her own family after she was raped. Catherine Filloux's ambitious but stilted new play, directed by Kay Matschullat, looks at the relationship between two unlikely allies: a Westernized feminist and a young village girl who half believes she deserves her cruel fate. The story has narrative power, but the flat-footed production strains for a lyricism that it doesn't achieve. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444. Through May 7.)

DOUBT
Cherry Jones stars in John Patrick Shanley's well-told tale about possible sexual abuse in a Catholic school. Doug Hughes directs. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/13/04.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FALSE SERVANT
In the Classic Stage Company's blithe revival of Marivaux's eighteenth-century comedy, with a sparkling new translation by Kathleen Tolan, Martha Plimpton gives a bravura performance as a noblewoman who dons breeches to set a trap for the scoundrel she's supposed to marry. Directed by Brian Kulick. (136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE GLASS MENAGERIE
In David Leveaux's brilliant staging of Tennessee Williams's delicate "memory play," set in Depression-era St. Louis, Jessica Lange gives a brave and electrifying performance as the matriarch Amanda Wingfield, whose husband fled her, and whose son, Tom (Christian Slater), will soon follow suit. She uses her fine, slim body and her beautiful elocution to illustrate how hysteria can shoot through a person. How to explain Slater's macho, shambling hero? He proves that he's more than willing to bend his stocky, powerful body to the steel of Williams's breathtaking cadences and runaway-train humor. (4/4/05) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA
A last, a musical for grownups. Lovely and complicated, deeply feeling without being sentimental, Craig Lucas's book is based on Elizabeth Spencer's novella about a Southern lady who takes Clara, her beautiful but intellectually impaired daughter, to Florence, where she stumbles into a love affair. Adam Guettel's arpeggio-laden music and nuanced lyrics are superb; as John Lahr wrote in his review of the show's Chicago production last year, "Guettel's tunes are richly textured and warmly atmospheric." The show has changed since Chicago—the daughter is now played by the clear-voiced Kelli O'Hara, with just the right mix of guilelessness and passion; the part of her lover is now played by Matthew Morrison. But the powerhouse remains: Victoria Clark, playing Clara's mother, who struggles with her conscience as her daughter fights for her right to love. Michael Yeargan's sets are faultless—his courtyards suggest the damp of stone and brick—and Catherine Zuber's tailored nineteen-fifties costumes add immeasurably to the play's authenticity. Directed by Bartlett Sher. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIAS
Ron Hutchinson's screwball comedy turns writer's block into slapstick. The play is spun around an actual historical moment—five days in February, 1939, when the massively over-budget production of "Gone with the Wind" went on hiatus, as the producer David O. Selznick (Douglas Sills) locked the screenwriter Ben Hecht (Matthew Arkin) and the director Victor Fleming (David Rasche) in his office and made them create a new script. In Hutchinson's depiction,

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this scenario resembles famous Preston Sturges meltdown scenes. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ORANGE FLOWER WATER
The writer Craig Wright, from the HBO drama "Six Feet Under," brings that program's blend of soulfulness and self-knowledge to his play about two crumbling marriages and a shaky love affair. Performed by an outstanding cast, the drama focusses on love, both real and mistaken, and its consequences. Carolyn Cantor's production is truly intimate, and not just because of its frank sex scene. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave. 212-868-4444.)

OUTWARD BOUND
Keen Company revives Sutton Vane's 1924 drama about a fateful sea voyage. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

A PICASSO
Jeffrey Hatcher's hollow new play, which imagines a meeting between Picasso and a Gestapo officer in occupied Paris, comes across like a catalogue of worn anecdotes culled from various Picasso biographies. Jill Eikenberry is amusingly dreary as the German interrogator, but Dennis Boutsikaris's Picasso lacks conviction. The play may invoke the great painter, but it fails to bring his charisma into the room. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE PILLOWMAN
This new drama by the astonishing thirty-five-year-old playwright Martin McDonagh ("The Beauty Queen of Leenane") explores the intellectual components of narrative: what makes a story work, and where the impulse to tell it comes from in the first place. As the play begins, Katurian (Billy Crudup), an author of grisly, witty children's stories, is being interrogated by two policemen: Tupolski (Jeff Goldblum) and Ariel (Zeljko Ivanek), who are short on subtlety and long on banalities. They represent the real world that Katurian, a ghastly fantasist, has never dealt with. Local children have been dying in the ways described in Katurian's tales, and the police want to uncover the facts in the case and to understand how Katurian got to be the way he is. But what writer has been able to explain the source of his art, his vision? That McDonagh is able to make this process work onstage, and that he is able to weave such large questions into a coherent dramatic frame, says a great deal about his formidable will and skill. (4/25/05) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

PRIVILEGE
A new dark comedy by Paul Weitz, about the social fallout two teen-agers suffer when their father is convicted of insider trading. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

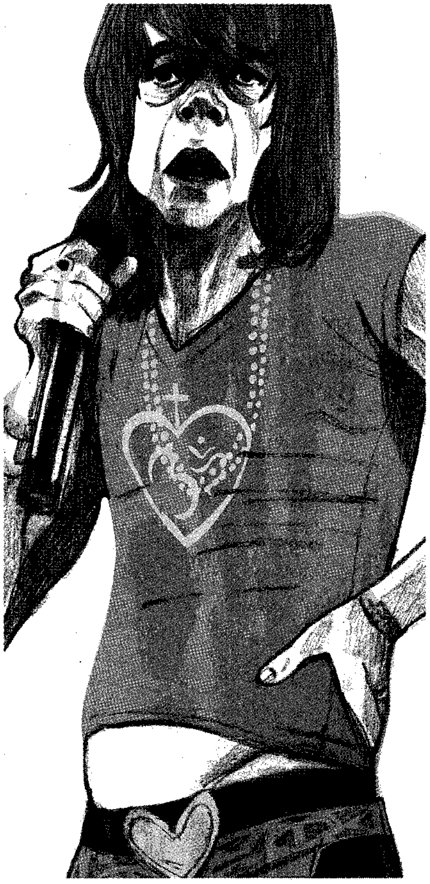
SOULS OF NAPLES
Eduardo De Filippo's play, translated by Michael Feingold (with plenty of Italian phrases kept in for flavor) is set in a sepia-toned suite of supposedly haunted apartments in postwar Naples. The show is a creaky old vessel, lovable for its antique airs but far from seaworthy. John Turturro is *molto dolce* as a naïve man who is too dense to pick up on his wife's philandering, but his benevolent credulity alone can't hold the audience's attention, and the production's old-fashioned pacing doesn't help. (Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE
Natasha Richardson stars in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of the Tennessee Williams play. Edward Hall directs. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

WIDOWERS' HOUSES
In George Bernard Shaw's first play, two Englishmen on the Continent, one a young pup just out of medical school (Sean McNall), the other a fop (Dominic Cuskern), draw another pair of travelling Brits into conversation over tea. The script shows the Master's first steps toward the hypocrisy-skewering dramas he became known for, but there is little else to commend this pedestrian production, which lacks the crisp timing and suave performances that the material demands. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through May 1.)

Also Playing

ABANDONMENT: Sanford Meisner Theatre, Eleventh Ave. at 22nd St. 212-868-4444. **ALL SHOOK UP:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DESSA ROSE:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **HURLYBURLY:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **JULIUS CAESAR:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **LAZER VAUDEVILLE:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NINE PARTS OF DESIRE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **ON GOLDEN POND:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **ROMANCE:** Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes May 1.) **SHOCKHEADED PETER:** Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. **SIDES (THE FEAR IS REAL):** P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. (Through May 1.) **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **TWELVE ANGRY MEN:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **WOMAN BEFORE A GLASS:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.



David Johansen brings the New York Dolls to Irving Plaza for three nights.

RACHEL DOMM

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—April 27: Two consummate songsmiths get together for a double bill of acoustic music. **Todd Rundgren** started off in the late sixties as a Beatles-inspired garage rocker with his band the Nazz, and then he morphed into a singer-songwriter in the following decade, penning the hits "Hello, It's Me" and "I Saw the Light." He later became a noted producer and delved into multimedia experimentation. **Joe Jackson** came of age in the wake of punk rock, filtered that genre's thorny aggression through a piano, and became one of the crucial angry young men of the New Wave movement.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—April 30: **Kansas** unleashed upon the world such needlessly intricate works as "Carry On My Wayward Son," "Point of Know Return," and the histrionic classic "Dust in the Wind." Anyone wary of lengthy violin solos and complicated arrangements should think twice about attending this show. May 3: The teen-pop icon **Donny Osmond** may no longer cause young girls to swoon, but his staying power rivals Dick Clark's. He still has that blinding signature smile, and, with the newly released album "What I Meant to Say," now has more than fifty records to his name.

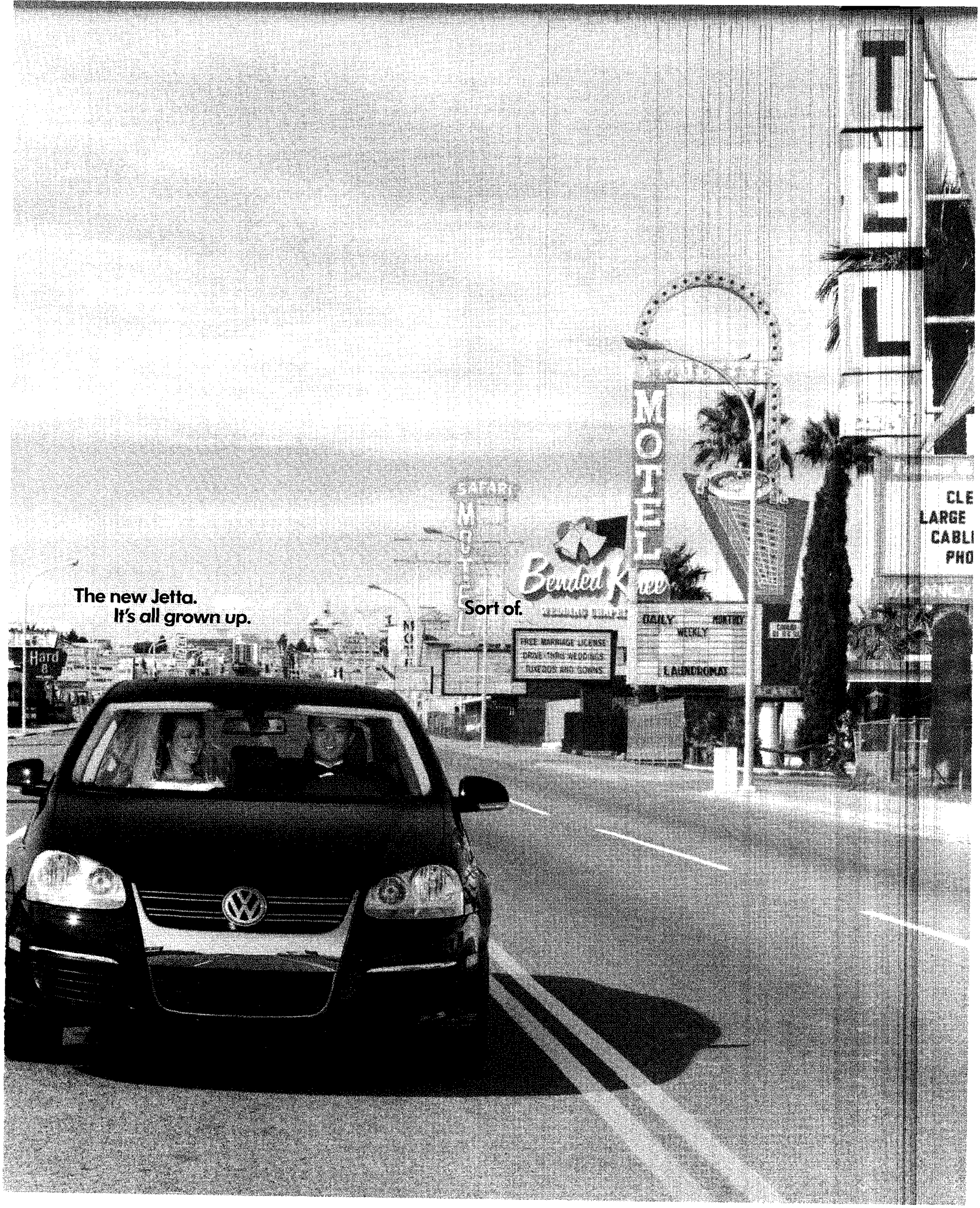
BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—April 27: Montreal's **Stars** bury grim insights about sex and romance under layers of fuzzy guitar and antique synthesizers. April 29: The **Wedding Present.** The British indie-rock prototype, dating from the late eighties and mid-nineties, played no-nonsense manic guitar rock that merged the lovelorn lyricism of the Smiths with the punk adrenaline of the Buzzcocks. The lead singer and songwriter, Dave Gedge, retired the band in 1997 in order to concentrate on a more pop-oriented project called Cinerama, which featured his girlfriend Sally Murrell on keyboards. Since breaking up with Murrell in 2002, however, Gedge re-formed the Wedding Present to help exorcise his emotional demons. The fruit of that turmoil is the band's triumphant new album, "Take Fountain." May 3: The creepy down-home sounds of **Shivaree,** a trio led by the intoxicating singer Ambrosia Parsley.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Thirty years ago, the **New York Dolls** paired the seedy downtown vibe of the Velvet Underground with a glam aesthetic and played a gloriously dishevelled high-volume rock. It was a sweaty, sexy combination, and it helped spawn, inadvertently, punk rock and hair metal, but it was all over too quickly. Then, last June, the ex-Smiths front man, Morrissey, a longtime fan, convinced the Dolls to get back together for a show. The death of the bassist Arthur (Killer) Kane a month later put the reunion in doubt, but the group played Randall's Island last summer, and they return for three shows April 28-30.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—April 29: The former Bongos front man, **Richard Barone,** holds court. April 30: The clarinet virtuoso **David Krakauer** has collaborated with everyone from the Kronos Quartet to John Zorn in his quest to fuse klezmer with classical, jazz, and funk. The Canadian d.j. **So-called** mixes strains of klezmer with hip-hop rhythms and Yiddish vaudeville music. The two performers have a forthcoming album, "Bubbemeises: Lies My Gramma Told Me," due out this fall, and they give a sneak preview here that's sure to include their frenetic version of the classic "Romania Romania." May 1: Nigeria's foremost musical statesman, **King Sunny Ade,** follows up the Great African Ball (see Roseland) with an acoustic set taking juju music back to its roots in the palm-wine halls of early-twentieth-century Lagos. The **Mingus Orchestra** is here Thursdays, with sets at 11:30 and 1:30 A.M.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—April 29: Nigeria's "Minister of Entertainment," **King Sunny Ade,** and **Prince Obi Osadebe,** "the Prince of Highlife," keep the dancers happy into the wee hours at the Great African Ball.

ROTHKO
116 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. (212-475-7088)—April 28: A formidable electronica artist, Berlin's maverick performer **Miss Kittin** (née Caroline Herve) is most at home behind the turntables, but she's also handy at the production boards and with a microphone. Her skills have landed her praise from the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ever-fickle rave, techno, and electroclash communities, and her name has become one to watch, and to drop.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—April 29-30: The **African Xylophone Festival** presents two days of concerts here, as well as workshops at Columbia University. Highlights include performances by Famoro Dioubate, a balaphon expert from Guinea, and the master drummer Bernard Woma, as well as the first concert appearance in New York City of an *embaire* xylophone from Uganda. Made from twenty-one logs, the instrument is so large that it stretches nearly ten feet and requires six musicians to play it. On the other end of the scale, the St. Ann's African Xylophone Ensemble of Brooklyn, which is made up of second and third graders, is also on the program. (For more information, visit www.jumbierecords.com.)

SYMPHONY SPACE
Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—The Palestinian violinist and oud player and New York City resident **Simon Shaheen** has helped familiarize a wide audience with the halftones and quarter tones of Arab world music. His solo albums and those with his eclectic band Qantara blend Middle Eastern melodies with everything from jazz improv to Latin-American percussion. He's here April 30 with his Near Eastern Music Ensemble to pay tribute to the composer and singer Farid Al-Atrash and his sister Asmahan, two icons of twentieth-century Arab music. (A presentation of the World Music Institute; for more information, call 212-545-7536.)

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—April 29: **Elysian Fields.** The guitarist Oren Bloedow and the sultry chanteuse Jennifer Charles are joined by a slew of downtown collaborators.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 28: The vocalist **Karen Akers.** Her new show, "When a Lady Loves," leans heavily on the usual suspects (Arlen, Porter, Carmichael), but her elegance elevates even the most familiar of material.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—April 27-30: Until his recent retirement, the vibraphone master **Gary Burton** was long affiliated with the Berklee College of Music, where he developed an ear for recognizing fresh young talent. His latest sextet features the impressive teen-age guitarist **Julian Lage.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—April 26-May 1: **Donald Harrison** has matured into a probing saxophonist whose deep New Orleans roots continue to inform his lucid solos. The bassist **Ron Carter** and the drummer **Billy Cobham,** two old rhythm mates from the seventies, lend support.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through May 27, **Barbara Cook.** Her longtime accompanist, Wally Harper, died last October, but the doyenne of cabaret has persevered with a new pianist and bassist. Her show "Tributes" celebrates the legacies of Bobby Short, Harold Arlen, and Harper, whose obscure originals gain lustre in Cook's warming embrace.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—In 1965, with full-fledged jazz fusion still a few years off, the **John Handy Quintet** turned in an electrifying and prescient performance at the Monterey Jazz Festival. The original band members—the violinist Michael White, the guitarist Jerry Hahn, the bassist Don Thompson, the drummer Terry Clarke, and the saxophonist Handy—must have enjoyed last year's brief reunion tour; they're back April 26-May 1 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of their breakthrough.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—April 28-May 1: Lip problems are the bane of trumpet players' lives, and the once seemingly indestructible **Freddie Hubbard** isn't immune to them. The spirit is still willing, though, and, with the support of the ambitious young acolytes who make up much of the New Jazz Composers Octet, "the Hub" continues to perform. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—April 26-28: The **Ray Barretto** sextet. The master *conguero,* a Brooklyn-born New York mainstay who was instrumental in bringing Latin rhythms to the masses, remains committed to the union of jazz improvisation and percolating cross-beats. April 29-May 1: The piano-playing jazz singer **Dena DeRose** should be better known. She's an incisive self-accompanist, and her shrewd keyboard skills match her delightful vocal interpretations.

THE STONE
Avenue C at 2nd St. (No phone)—John Zorn's compact new-jazz haven continues its expertly programmed inaugural shows. April 29: The saxophonist **Charles Gayle** (early set) and the trumpeter **Roy Campbell.** The next night, the **Laura Andel ElectricPercussive Orchestra** plays the early show, followed by the drummer **Pheeroan Ak Laff.** The Dutch pianist **Misha Mengelberg** takes over curatorial duties in May. He's here a number of times throughout the month, including May 1 and May 3.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—April 26-May 1: The Lou Donaldson quartet. With one foot in well-turned bop soil and the other in R. & B. territory, the alto saxophonist Donaldson pledges allegiance to both virtuosity and entertainment. The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Sol LeWitt On the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A summer installation in the roof garden of five sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ **"Max Ernst: A Retrospective."** Some hundred and eighty paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and illustrated books by the restlessly creative artist (1891-1976). Through July 10. ♦ **"Diane Arbus: Revelations,"** an indeed revealing (though gratingly worshipful) retrospective, confirms Arbus's achievement as a revolutionary photographer. Through May 15. ♦ **"From Filippo Lippi to Piero della Francesca: Fra Carnevale and the Making of a Renaissance Master."** Scholars have been slowly unearthing the oeuvre of Fra Carnevale, an artist little known aside from his mention in Vasari's "Lives of the Artists," over the course of the past century; this exhibition presents what is now known of the lost master's paintings, along with samples of his contemporaries' work. Through May 1. ♦ **"The Kano School: Orthodoxy and Iconoclasm."** Through June 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's winning redesign for the abandoned elevated train tracks that run through Chelsea is on display in **"The High Line."** Through July 18. ♦ **"Thomas Demand."** The German artist's crisp photographs of cut-and-glued, life-size mockups of unpeopled environments suggest that, like photographs, our assumptions about reality are paper thin. Through May 30. ♦ **"Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape"** surveys the newest waves in landscape design with elaborate architectural models, virtual tours, video, and photographs. Through May 16. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

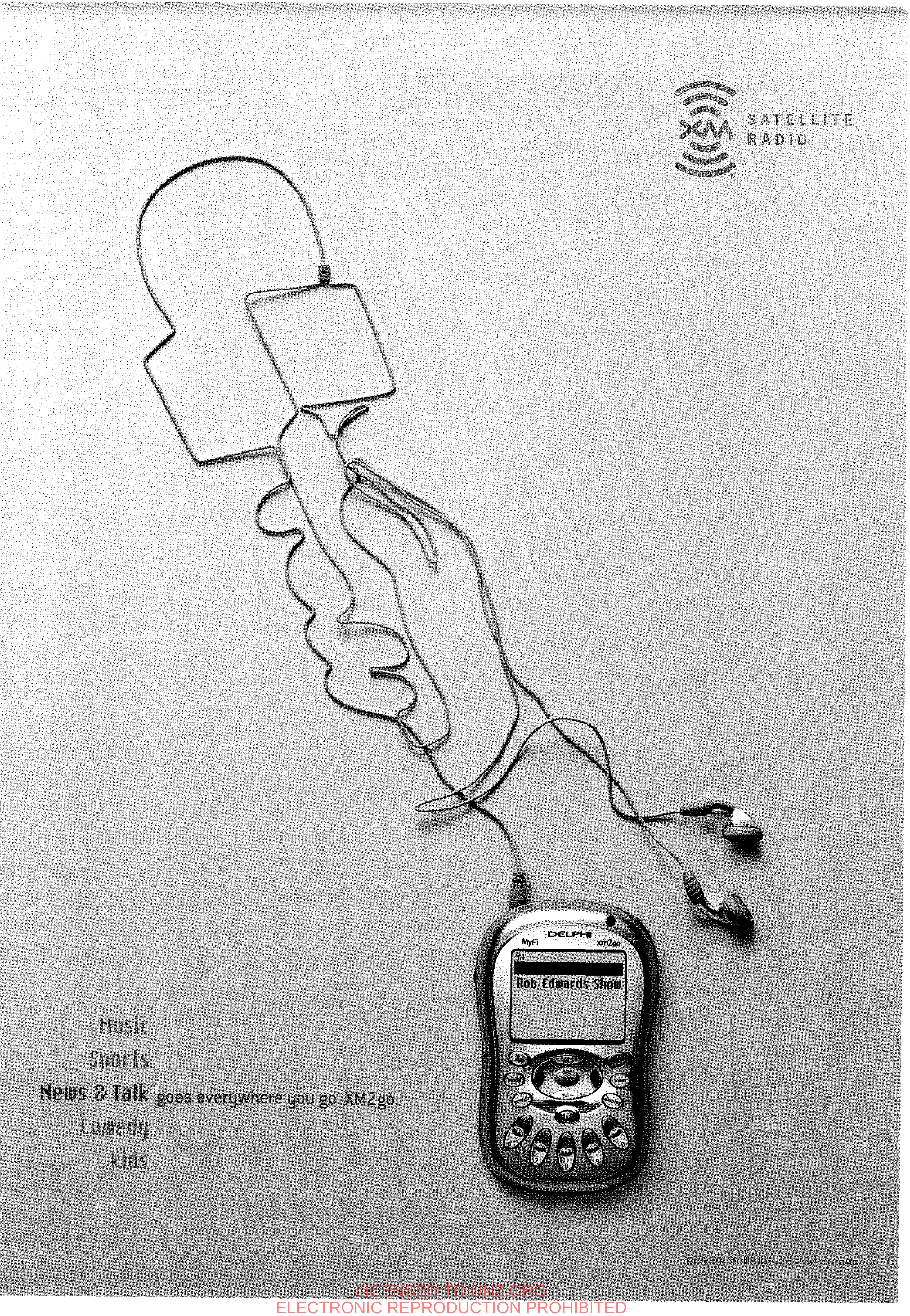
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Eye of the Storm: Works in Situ by Daniel Buren."** Through June 8. ♦ **"The Hugo Boss Prize 2004: Rirkrit Tiravanija."** Tiravanija's "Untitled 2005 (The Air Between the Chain-Link Fence and the Broken Bicycle Wheel)" takes viewers' experience of television from passive to active with an engaging demonstration of how to build a low-power TV station. Through May 11. ♦ **"Recent Acquisitions: Slater Bradley's 'Doppelganger Trilogy'"** gathers three of the artist's recent videos, for which he staged utterly convincing faux performances by Kurt Cobain, Michael Jackson, and Ian Curtis. Weirdly, thrillingly, the videos can play like lost bootlegs of

POP NOTES
MIXED BLESSINGS

You can't get an accurate reading of what's going on in the hip-hop world by buying only official releases. You have to buy mix tapes, where songs appear months before they début in regular record stores. Created by d.j.s with access to hip-hop artists, mix tapes consist of exclusive tracks, new lyrics rapped over existing hits, between-song patter, and all kinds of other recorded behaviors that have likely not been cleared with any lawyer. Once they were literally cassette tapes; these days mix tapes are mostly sub-rosa CDs sold on the street and the Internet for "promotional use only." Selling uncleared mix tapes is a technically illegal act that's typically left unpunished, unless there's a particularly zealous public official or record label.

OutKast, an Atlanta hip-hop group embraced by critics and consumers alike, is currently working on a film and a soundtrack album. The group has another pressing obligation, though: to hold its own against the entire city of Houston, whose slow and menacing sound will rule the charts this year. OutKast and its Atlanta associates employ a sharp and light-footed style of rhyming and production that's like espresso next to Houston's cough syrup. The OutKast member Big Boi has started a new label, Purple Ribbon, and he is showcasing his signees on a vibrant collection called **"Got That Purp,"** created with the help of a team of Atlanta d.j.s called the Aphilliates and available online and elsewhere. In true mix-tape tradition, Killer Mike rhymes, somewhat terrifyingly and maybe without permission, over an old hit, "Cupid," a romantic ballad from 1996 by the Atlanta R. & B. group 112. Big Boi cleverly co-opts his challengers by including the Houston elder Bun B on a fabulous new track, "808," whose beat sounds a little like an amplified trampoline being alternately loosened and tightened. This mix tape is also helpfully curatorial, collecting and preserving older songs that you may have missed the first time around. "So Fresh So Clean Pt. 2," a stunning sequel to OutKast's 2000 hit, features a live horn section and sounds more like the Temptations than like any current hip-hop. And then there's the silky "I Can't Wait," a collaboration between OutKast and the singer Sleepy Brown that was originally released on last year's "Barbershop 2" soundtrack. The song became a minor hit, and it's included again here. Not that we told you.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*



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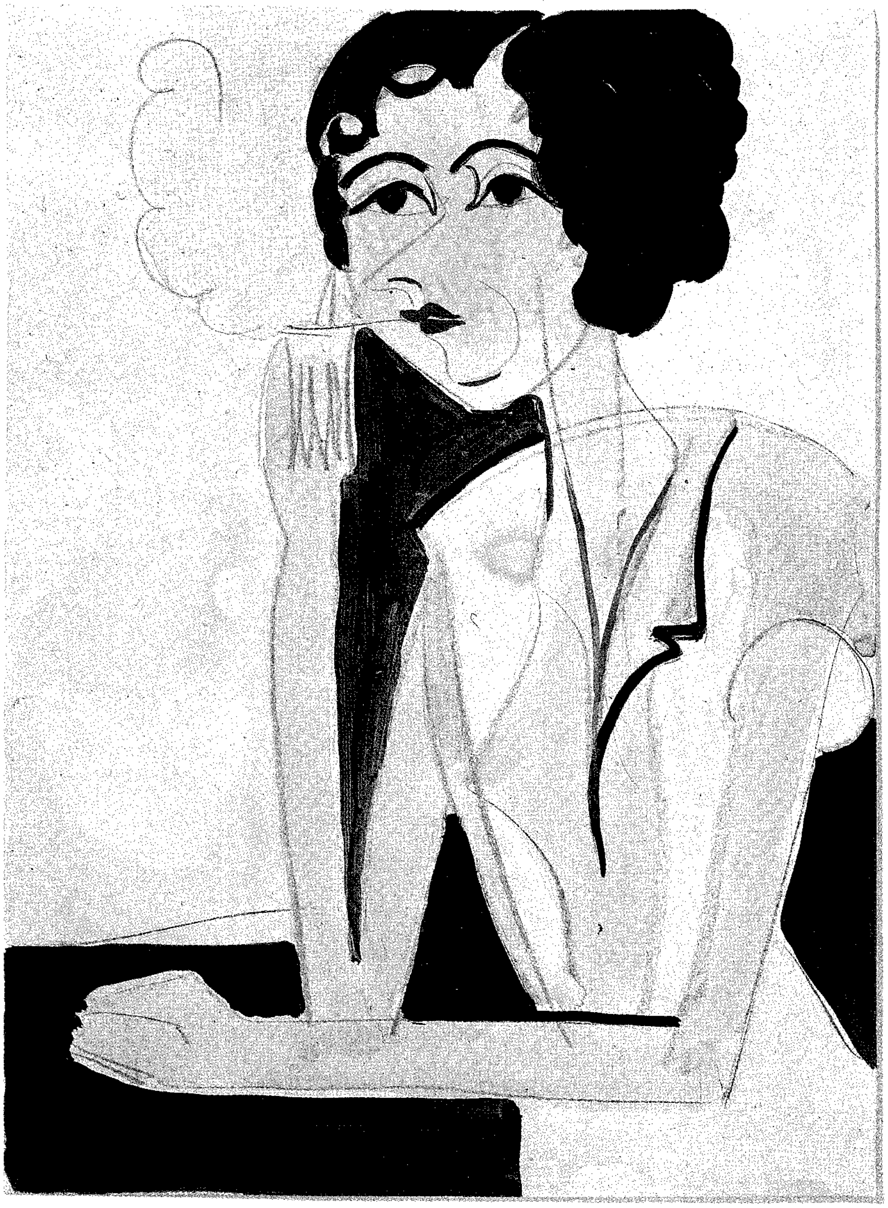

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's "Portrait of a Girl" (1933), on view at Werner.

fallen heroes. Through May 22. ♦ The museum surveys twentieth-century innovation in painting with three exhibitions of work drawn from the permanent collection: **"School of Paris,"** through May 3, and **"Expressionism"** and **"Paul Klee,"** both through May 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper."** Through May 8. ♦ **"Tim Hawkinson,"** a mid-career retrospective of the California artist's diverse inventions, including the football-field-size "Überorgan," an automated bagpipe housed in the sculpture garden at 590 Madison Avenue, at Fifty-seventh Street. Through May 29. ♦ **"Ellen Gallagher: DeLuxe,"** a series of embellished images based on advertisements from mid-century African-American magazines. Through May 15. ♦ **"Prints Into Drawings,"** a roomful of prints made in the last fifty years assembled to illustrate the shared techniques of drawing and printmaking. Among the works are a Vija Celmins lithograph of the ocean; a fabulous three-layered abstract lithograph by Julie Mehretu; and a 1960 de Kooning lithograph with text by Harold Rosenberg, titled "Revenge." Through Aug. 1. ♦ **"Set Up: Recent Acquisitions in Photography."** Through June 26. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Basquiat"** is an important, intensely enjoyable retrospective of the neo-expressionist, who died in 1988, at the age of twenty-seven. Through June 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India,"** a dual-venue show with the Queens Museum that takes the pulse of the contemporary art scene in the world's largest democracy. Through June 5. ♦ Michael Joo's **"Bodhi Obfuscatus (Space-Baby)."** Through May 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—The retrospective **"Larry Clark"** covers a lot of ground, much of it more than once. Beginning with his first book, "Tulsa," in 1971, Clark has focussed on kids: adolescents shooting up, fondling guns, and looking ready for a car wreck. Through June 5. ♦ Also on view: recent acquisitions. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 E. 47th St. (212-752-3015)—Curated by Takashi Murakami, **"Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture"** is a survey of *otaku*-influenced artists, including Yoshitomo Nara, Chinatsu Ban (whose supercute elephant sculpture stands at the southeast corner of Central Park), and Murakami himself. Through July 24. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"Surrealism U.S.A."** is a superb roundup of paintings and sculptures from the nineteen-thirties and forties surveying modernism's version of punk. Through May 8. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows–Corona Park (718-592-9700)—**"Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India,"** a dual-venue show with the Asia Society. Through June 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER
These drawings span Kirchner's career, from the Die Brücke days of the early twentieth century to a few years before his suicide, in 1938. Color is the main weapon of Expressionism, of course, but it's mostly absent here, save for a few drawings utilizing a rainbow of chalk colors. Kirchner makes up for it with frenetic lines in sketches of bathers, reclining nudes, landscapes, and the occasional bit of livestock. Early examples are rougher and cruder, echoing the primitivism of the German Expressionists. He settles down later, perhaps too much; a 1935 scene of a couple lounging on a balcony at an alpine resort town lacks the energy of his earlier work. Through May 14. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623.)

YOSHUA OKON
A collection of artfully arranged tree trunks turns the gallery into something like an ape habitat or a big-cat cage at the zoo. Does this make us the animals? Not quite. Jungle sounds emanate from car stereos embedded in the wood, and little monitors are inset beside them. Filmed in Mexico City, the video snippets show locals who responded to Okon's request that they act out their idea of "savagery." Moms, grandpas, and teen-agers creep, growl, and claw the air—it's meant to make us question assumptions about otherness. The videos are interesting, but they are dwarfed by the installation, which is not. Through April 30. (The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673.)

PHILIP PEARLSTEIN
Foreshortened, cropped, bony, but nonetheless realistic, Pearlstein's nudes from the nineteen-sixties announced the artist's defiance of Ab Ex orthodoxy. Dead-faced models pose in perspectivally complex studio setups—one positions two angular women with a large canvas turned tellingly to the wall. Their tense yet neutral postures anticipate Pearlstein's unswerving work in the same vein ever since; he still paints people as if they were objects, positing erotic relationships as affectless calculations in space. Through April 30. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

JULIAN SCHNABEL
A palpable ache for Old Europe pervades this selection of paintings made between 1978 and 2001. Picasso, Velázquez, and Michelangelo are still the guys to beat, and Schnabel has at them with enormous canvases heaped with paint and trash. Titles and subjects are overblown ("St. Francis in Ecstasy," "Maria Callas," "St. Sebastian—Born in 1951"); pottery shards, cowhide, and plaster often obscure the figures; sentiment flows as grandly as a big two-hearted river. This is the epicenter of eighties excess, the machismo and the expressionist *bonheur de vivre* that were simultaneously celebrated and reviled. But if you like your painters bigger than life, this is the place to be. Through June 4. (C&M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020.)

Short List

BRUCE MCCALL: James Goodman, 41 E. 57th St. 212-593-3737. Through April 30. **PAT STEIR:** Cook,

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1063 Madison Ave., at 81st St. 212-737-3550. Through May 11. **THOMAS STRUTH:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through May 7. **"CELEBRATE: 22 YEARS & A NEW HOME":** Tilton, 8 E. 76th St. 212-737-2221. Through May 12.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

INGRID CALAME
Calame's compositions derive from inauspicious sources: oil stains in streets and graffiti and paint spills on the concrete embankment of the Los Angeles River. Traced in colored pencil and transferred to big sheets of Mylar, they look like colorful topographical maps. The networks of lines on clean, clear surfaces are diaphanous, with lighter marks disappearing into the ground; the effect is as enthralling, and as delicately precise, as an illuminated manuscript. From a graphic standpoint, a lot of painting looks like this today: vaguely digital, schematic, obsessively detailed. But Calame was well ahead of the curve, and she continues to offer compelling refinements to her readymade abstractions. Through April 30. (James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

TIM GARDNER
The profound Canadian Photo-Realist, known for sensitive watercolors of collegiate louts, takes up pastels to copy old posed portrait photographs of himself and his family. In one, featuring echt seventies clothes and hair, Mom, Dad, and the three boys (Tim's the lost-looking middle one, between worried Nick and unctuous Tobi) exude desperate sweetness. Gardner's veristic technique enthralls—you can't get enough of looking at it—but the true miracle of his art is its revelation of middle-class inner lives, in precise ratios of innocence and dread. How does anyone survive? Through May 28. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES/ RONI HORN
The second in an anticipated five-part series pairing the work of Gonzalez-Torres with that of other artists, this show takes a turn from the previous juxtaposition with Joseph Kosuth. Here language and the categorizing of social structures are downplayed, while themes of coupling, loss, and a kind of severe opulence emerge. Two give-away pieces by Gonzalez-Torres—a pile of gold-wrapped candies and a stack of posters depicting black-and-white waves—rhyme with Horn's series of water photographs and small carpet of pure-gold foil. Similarly, Gonzalez-Torres's twinned, synchronized clocks ("Perfect Lovers") mirror Horn's diptych of a glaring stuffed white owl. Through April 30. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

"HAVING DIFFERENCES"
Seven emerging artists from Los Angeles contributed work to this group show. The installation is messy and unfocussed, but there are nice moments: Dave Deany's drawings of dead trees in marker made translucent with alcohol, Will Benedict's long particleboard table furrowed with rounded twin grooves modelled on his own posterior, and Laurie Nye's lily-pad painting, which seems to imagine Monet reborn in the era of anime. Through April 30. (I-20, 529 W. 20th St. 212-645-1100.)

"VERNACULAR TERRITORY"
Although George Tice is clearly intended to be this show's stylistic exemplar, his views of water towers, pizzerias, liquor stores, and other roadside sites in New Jersey are starting to look a bit stodgy and inert. Peter Kayafas takes on similar subjects in the South and in Cuba with far more economical results: his pictures are crisp and direct, and the best of them vibrate with understated graphic tension. Photographing at parades, fairs, and amusement parks across the U.S., Kate Schermerhorn introduces people to the landscape and brings genuine life to the show. In her small black-and-white prints nothing seems wasted, and nothing's excessive. Through May 7. (Meyerowitz, 120 Eleventh Ave. 212-414-2770.)

Short List

BERTOZZI & CASONI: Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through April 30. **JANE HAMMOND:** Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470. Through May 3. **MARTIN KIPPENBERGER:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through April 30. **JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE:** Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774. Through April 30. **PAT STEIR:** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through May 7. **JAMES WELLING:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through May 7.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

CARTER MULL
Mull's visceral still-lifes of dust, grease, hair, rock salt, and mirror shards look like they were sucked out of a sewer drain and spewed across his studio floor. Because he scatters faceted glass beads and gold medallions on this chaotic terrain, it's hard not to think of Lucas Samaras, but Bruce Conner's grungy assemblages and Cindy Sherman's vomit-flecked landscapes also help set the stage for Mull's mess. It's not entirely surprising, then, to find something exhilarating and alluring about this head-on collision of the abject and the (semi)precious; Mull revels in his materials with such abandon and assurance that backing off is not an option. Through May 13. (Rivington Arms, 102 Rivington St. 646-654-3213.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
In 1958, Jerome Robbins created the dance "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz" for the touring group Ballets: U.S.A., for the first Spoleto Festival. Set to a score by Robert Prince and intended to show the casual, jazzy vitality of American youth, the piece was originally danced in sneakers. It receives its City Ballet première this week. ♦ April 27 at 8: "Chichester Psalms," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "Who Cares?" ♦ April 28 at 8 and May 1 at 3: "Who Cares?" and "Union Jack." ♦ April 29 at 8: "Chichester Psalms," "Sonatas and Interludes," "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ April 30 at 2: "Chichester Psalms," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "Union Jack." ♦ April 30 at 8: "Apollo," "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ May 3: "Chichester Psalms," "Sonatas and Interludes," "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz," and "Who Cares?" (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. April 26 at 7:30. Through June 26.)

"CHANNEL SUR"
The final week of Danspace Project's festival of Latin-American dance offers rarely seen work from Argentina, Peru, and Brazil. On two rotating programs, foreign artists share the bill with the New York-based contemporary choreographers Antonio Ramos, Alejandra Martorell, and Mariangela Lopez and the performance artist Fábio Tavares. (Clemente Solo Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. 212-674-8194. April 28-May 1 at 8.)

"DEADLY SHE-WOLF ASSASSIN AT ARMAGEDDON"
The composer and conceptual artist Fred Ho and the playwright Ruth Margraff unveil excerpts from their bold new martial-arts ballet, an homage to the Japanese manga series "Lone Wolf and Cub." Scenes of hand-to-hand combat and dizzying swordplay are intercut with action-movie-style dialogue while Ho leads a live ensemble through his energetic score, a fusion of soul, jazz, and traditional Japanese music. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. April 29-30 at 8.)

"MANDALAS 2005"
Since 1997, Murray Spalding has created meditative circle dances, in which women swirl their skirts as they move, carrying themselves with elegant bearing as they execute interweaving patterns. In the first of two premières, dancers evoke

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
EXTRA EXPOSURE

The recent-acquisitions shows that crop up on museum calendars are rarely more than self-congratulatory schedule-fillers. But what the International Center of Photography has tucked into the one gallery not filled with Larry Clark's work deserves more than a passing glance. Organized around the theme of portraiture, the exhibition is both a tip-of-the-iceberg showcase and a revealing cross-section of the I.C.P.'s collection. It is driven by deft juxtapositions: odalisques by Bellocq and Katy Grannan lounge beneath Yasumasa Morimura's sprawled homage to Cindy Sherman, James Van Der Zee's robed prophet communes with Malick Sidibé's African sitters, and Andy Warhol's photo-booth strip of Edie Sedgwick twits the cool formality of Irving Penn's Mrs. William Rhinelander Stewart. But the most engaging items aren't by famous photographers. This anonymous and amateur work is key to the collection's range and savvy idiosyncrasy. Take, for example, the color snapshot of John F. Kennedy smiling in the back of a limousine in Dallas, just minutes before his assassination.

—*Vince Aletti*

desert movement—a camel's loping gait, a snake's curve—as the mandala unspools; in the second, the dancers drum out insistent rhythms with their feet. The calm, geometric dances are performed to original music by Evren Celimli. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. April 28-May 1 at 8:30.)

BALLET FOLKLÓRICO QUETZALLI
To dance *la bamba*, so the famous song says, you need a little grace. This Mexican folk-dance troupe, which, like the song, hails from Veracruz, has enough for the job. Celebrating its twentieth anniversary, the group presents traditions from Guerrero, Michoacán, Baja California, and its home state. With Aztec headdresses, twirling skirts, stomping feet, and clanging knives, a Quetzalli performance offers moments of spectacle, but its charm is mostly low key and friendly, like that of a small-town fiesta. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. April 29 at 8.)

CHAMECKILERNER
With "Costumes by God," downtown dance's Brazilian duo has produced another intensely provocative long-form piece. This time, the subject is sex. The atmosphere, inspired by the forbidden pleasures of carnival, is electric and discomfiting. Four actor-dancers move through an erotic *purgatorio*, licking, rubbing, thrusting—then striding briskly to another spot to begin again. The performers' personal portraits of sex and orgasm walk a charged line between erotic art and pornography. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. April 27-30 at 7:30.)

CUDAMANI
In "Odalan Bali," this twenty-five-member troupe from Southeast Asia goes beyond simply performing the traditional dance and music of its island home. Setting the ceremonies in the context of everyday village life, the show evokes a culture saturated in ritual, shaped by art. The gentle rhythms of sweeping brooms set the tone for an evening centered on the layered resonances of the gamelan. The ethereal mood isn't broken even when the lively musicians and dancers get boisterous or when the long-clawed, shaggy Susuhanan spirit makes its dramatic entrance. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. May 1 at 7.)

STREB S.L.A.M.
Elizabeth Streb's acrobatic, madly inventive troupe presents experiments in what they call "PopAction" at the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics, in Williamsburg. Highlights: "Gauntlet 2," in which the performers dodge a swinging cement-block pendulum; and "Ricochet," in which they bounce themselves off a Plexiglas wall. (51 N. 1st St. 718-384-6491. April 30 at 7 and May 1 at 3. Through May 8.)

"KEIGWIN KABARET IN LITE FM"
The downtown dance scene travels uptown to Symphony Space, where Larry Keigwin m.c.s new work by Julian Barnett, Nicole Wolcott, Ying-Ying Shiau, and others, along with shows by the burlesque queen Dirty Martini, the hula-hoop artiste Miss Saturn, and the Happy Hour Clowns. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-868-5400. April 29 at 8:30 and April 30 at 8:30 and 10:30.)

AYNSLEY VANDENBROUCKE MOVEMENT GROUP
The young choreographer's new "Seven Times Fall Down, Eight Times Get Up" reveals her gift for simple, strong images. Set to Gregorian chant, the meditative first part, "After the Fall," draws on classic religious iconography, grouping a sisterhood of eight women in pietà formations and lines of swaying crucifixes. Over and over, they fall. In the second half, "Below the Skin," the sacrificial fervor speeds up, as the violist Leanne Darling, aided by a phase repeater, plays her minimalist score. Despite the work's September 11th origins and the electronics, it could be from the nineteen-thirties. (Clark Studio Theatre at Lincoln Center, W. 65th St. at Amsterdam Ave. 212-868-4444. April 28-May 1 at 8.)

"CLOUD 9"
The Belgian choreographer Chantal Yzermans and her group Radical Low present a dance set to Terry Riley's "In C," with video by the French filmmaker Sylvia Zade-Routier. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. April 28-May 1 at 8.)

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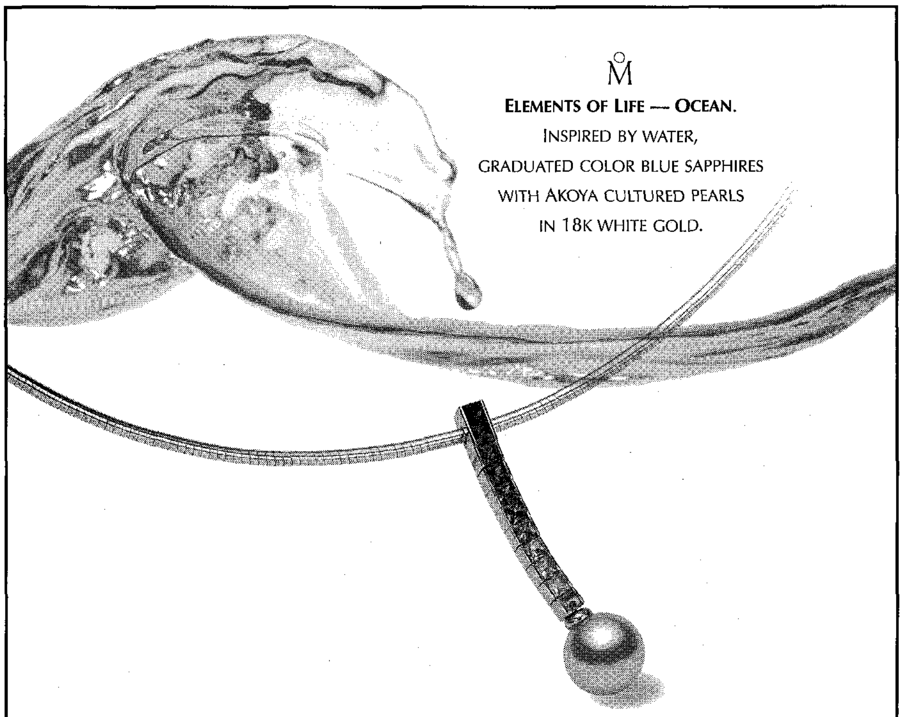

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OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

April 27 at 8 and April 30 at 8:30: Puccini's **"Turandot,"** with Audrey Stottler (in the title role), Janice Watson, Franco Farina, and Vitalij Kowaljow; Marco Armiliato conducts. ♦ April 28 at 7:30: A slimmed-down Deborah Voigt takes the role of Amelia in a revival of **"Un Ballo in Maschera"**; unlike Maria Callas after her dramatic weight loss, Voigt is vocally better than ever—her intonation remains excellent, her tone solid and deeply affecting. She is joined by an able cast that includes Lyubov Petrova, Larissa Diadkova, Marcello Giordani, and Carlos Alvarez; James Conlon. ♦ May 3 at 7:30: The final performance, with Aprile Millo, an expressive Met soprano with a cult following, replacing Voigt. ♦ April 29 and May 2 at 8: **"La Clemenza di Tito"** has always had its detractors: why did Mozart, after the triumphs of the innovative Da Ponte operas and of "The Magic Flute," return to the outdated genre of the opera seria? But this is still Mozart, after all, and there is much to enjoy. Frank Lopardo (in the title role) and Luca Pisaroni join a wonderful quartet of women—Heidi Grant Murphy, Melanie Diener, Anne Sofie von Otter, and Sarah Connolly (in her Met début); James Levine. ♦ April 30 at 1:30: Andrei Serban's Brechtian production of Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini" may have upset some of the Met's more conservative patrons, but the company has brought the maverick director back for a new version of Gounod's **"Faust,"** with Soile Isokoski, Kristine Jepson, Roberto Alagna, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, and René Pape in the leading roles; Levine. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER: "THE BARTERED BRIDE"

Smetana's bumptious Czech classic (sung in English), with a student cast conducted by Mark Stringer and directed by Eve Shapiro. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 212-721-6500. April 27 and April 29 at 8 and May 1 at 2.)

"MARIO AND THE MAGICIAN"

The Center for Contemporary Opera presents the première of an opera by the composer Francis Thorne and the librettist J. D. McClatchy, based on the story by Thomas Mann. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. April 29-30 at 8.)

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK: "ORPHÉE ET EURIDICE"

Ewa Podleś, the world's most compelling contralto, never sings at the Met, so her appearance (as Orpheus) in this concert performance of Gluck's opera will be a magnet for her fans. Lyndon Woodside conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 2 at 8.)

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS: "BEFORE NIGHT FALLS"

Steven Osgood directs a concert presentation of Jorge Martín's opera in progress, based on the memoirs of the Cuban homosexual dissident Reinaldo Arenas (which served as the basis for Julian Schnabel's film from 2000). (Clark Studio Theatre, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. May 2-3 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Freed from the lofty aspirations of its "Visions of the Beyond" festival, the Philharmonic turns its attention to earthier concerts. Twentieth-century music doesn't get much more intense than Shostakovich and Prokofiev, and in this program both composers' First Piano Concertos will be dispatched by an impassioned duo—the pianist Martha Argerich and the conductor Mstislav Rostropovich. The concert closes with Prokofiev's doleful and nostalgic Seventh Symphony; Shostakovich's "Festive Overture," an almost manic essay in socialist realism, begins it. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. April 27-28 at 7:30 and April 29-30 at 8.)

THE HILLIARD ENSEMBLE

The expert and ethereal vocal sextet—stars of the ECM catalogue—sings music by two spiritually centered composers, J. S. Bach (featuring the motet "Jesu, Meine Freude") and Arvo Pärt (including the American premières of "Most Holy Mother of God" and "My Heart's in the Highlands"). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-721-6500. April 27 at 8.)

BALTIMORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The lean and vibrant orchestra, once an engine for new American music, has become an outlet for the conservative tastes of the veteran Russian maestro Yuri Temirkanov. Giya Kancheli's "Lonesome," a welcome contemporary work, begins a program that continues with music by Shostakovich (the Violin Concerto No. 1, with Gidon Kremer), Debussy ("La Mer"), and Ravel ("La Valse"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 29 at 8.)

JUILLIARD CHORAL UNION

Duruflé's Requiem caps an evening of French sacred music, which also includes works by Gounod, Milhaud, Messiaen, and Fauré (the radiant "Cantique de Jean Racine," with the Chiara Quartet assisting). (Alice Tully Hall. May 2 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

RECITALS

MITSUKO UCHIDA

The renowned pianist brings her forceful yet elusive style to masterworks by Boulez ("Notations"), Schubert (the Sonata in C Major, D. 840), and Beethoven (the "Hammerklavier" Sonata). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 27 at 8.)

ROBERT LEVIN: "MOZART EXPLORED"

In "Pupils: Amateurs and Virtuosi," the maverick early-music scholar and pianist is joined by a veteran master of the keyboard, Malcolm Bilson, to perform some four-hand Mozart music, both easy and difficult. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 28 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC

The pianist Roustem Saitkoulov spends a long weekend at the Barge with some talented young colleagues. April 28-29 at 7:30: A solo recital of Brahms, including the Four Ballades, Op. 10, and the Klavierstücke, Op. 118. ♦ April 30 at 7:30: The cellist Ashley Bathgate joins Saitkoulov for music by Bach, Beethoven (the Cello Sonata in D Major, Op. 102, No. 2), and Franck. ♦ May 1 at 7:30: The pianist teams up with the violinist Noemi Schindler for sonatas by Bartók, Schumann, and Ravel. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

DAWN UPSHAW AND RICHARD GOODE

The intrepid soprano, pure of heart and pure of tone, sings songs by Schumann (the Eichendorff "Liederkreis," Op. 39), Debussy, and Mussorgsky; her estimable pianist also plays solo works by Debussy ("L'Isle Joyeuse") and Haydn. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 28 at 8.)

YUNDI LI

The poised and elegant young Deutsche Grammophon pianist plays music by Mozart, Schumann ("Carnaval"), Chopin, and Liszt at Alice Tully Hall. (212-721-6500. April 28 at 8.)

JENNIFER KOH

The violinist, a smart player whose strong technique and lyrical style won her the top prize at the 1994 Tchaikovsky Competition, and her accompanist, Reiko Uchida, offer a varied and invigorating program of music by Schumann, Schubert, Ravel, John Adams ("Road Movies"), and Esa-Pekka Salonen. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. April 28 at 8.)

ZANKEL HALL RECITALS

April 29: The Czech composer-performer Iva Bittová, on violin and vocals, is the special guest for the Bang on a Can All-Stars' Zankel début, a pro-

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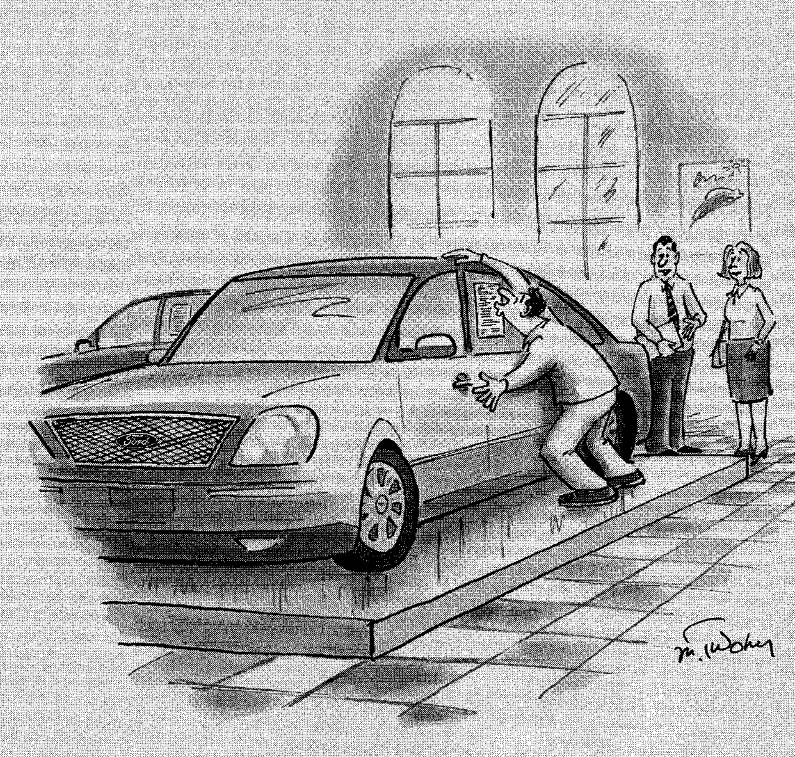

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gram that also features works by Glenn Branca, Paul Lansky, and Evan Ziporyn. ♦ April 30: Mitsuko Uchida and Mark Steinberg play several of Mozart's Sonatas for Piano and Violin, which they have recently recorded. ♦ May 1: Soile Isokoski, a soprano of aristocratic elegance in town for the Met's new "Faust," sings songs by Mozart, Wolf, Wagner (the "Wesendonck Lieder"), and Sallinen. ♦ May 3: Kremerata Baltica's performance of Shostakovich's Fourteenth Symphony last fall was a stunner; now the group's Soloists ensemble (with Gidon Kremer, of course, on violin) plays a chamber arrangement of the Fifteenth Symphony, along with Shostakovich's Viola Sonata and a new work by Alexander Wustin. (212-247-7800. All concerts begin at 7:30.)

MILLER THEATRE
George Steel's cutting-edge venue offers its final concerts of the season. April 29 at 8: The Trigon String Trio's "Bach and the Twentieth Century" series winds up with performances of the Master's Trio Sonatas Nos. 4 and 6, gamely paired with the String Trios by Webern and Frank Martin. ♦ May 2 at 8: Alloy Concert/Theatre offers "Broadway Voices + American Art Song," a garland of classic songs by Rorem, Beeson, Barber ("Knoxville: Summer of 1915"), and Ives, performed by Broadway singer-actors (such as Merwin Foard) and staged by Casey Hushion. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.)

"FROM PROUST TO BOULEZ"
The author and the composer (who turned eighty in March), both artists of exquisite precision, are linked in two concerts offered by the Alliance Players (including the violinist Nurit Pacht and the pianists Daniel Gortler and Steven Gosling). April 29 at 8: "Marcel Proust as Musician," including works by Saint-Saëns and Franck (the Piano Quintet); a discussion (with the critic Jeremy Eichler and the writer Edmund White, among others) and a "Proustian Picnic" precede the concert. ♦ May 1 at 7:30: "Pierre Boulez at Eighty," featuring performances of the composer's "Anthèmes," Second Piano Sonata, and Sonatina for Flute. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100.)

DAVID FINCKEL AND WU HAN
The Emerson Quartet cellist and his wife, the co-directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, cross the East River to offer a recital of sonatas for cello and piano by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Rachmaninoff. (LeFrak Concert Hall, Colden Center, Queens College. 718-793-8080. May 1 at 2.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: AL AYRE ESPAÑOL
In "La Cantada Española en América," the Spanish ensemble performs Baroque cantatas and instrumental works preserved in the library of a cathedral in Guatemala. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. May 1 at 4.)

CONTRASTS QUARTET
The engaging group, an ensemble of violin, cello, clarinet, and piano, offers new works by Aaron Jay Kernis and Jing Jing Luo ("Drama for Four Spirits") along with Kernis's "Trio in Red" and a Hindemith quartet. (St. Peter's Church in Chelsea, 346 W. 20th St. 212-929-2390. May 1 at 4.)

EVGENY KISSIN AND JAMES LEVINE
The conductor joins the fiery Russian pianist for an all-Schubert piano-duo recital (including the Fantasie in F Minor and the "Grand Duo"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 1 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

ANOTHER ROAD HOME
The Israeli filmmaker Danae Elon documents her search for the Palestinian man who was her childhood caregiver. Opening April 29. (Angelika Film Center and Metro Twin.)

À TOUT DE SUITE
Benoît Jacquot wrote and directed this drama, about a fugitive couple on the run in Europe in the nineteen-seventies. In French. Opening April 29. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
An adaptation of the time-travel sci-fi classic, directed by Garth Jennings. With Martin Freeman, Mos Def, Zooey Deschanel, and Sam Rockwell. Opening April 29. (In wide release.)

THE HOLY GIRL
A Catholic teen-ager and her mother are attracted to the same man, in an Argentinean drama directed by Lucrecia Martel ("La Ciénaga"). In Spanish. Opening April 29. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

3-IRON
Kim Ki-duk directed this drama about a man who inhabits unsuspecting vacationers' homes. In Korean. Opening April 29. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE TUNNEL
A suspense thriller based on the true story of an East German man who dug a tunnel under the Berlin Wall to help his family escape to the West in 1961. In German. Opening April 29. (Metro Twin and Quad Cinema.)

XXX: STATE OF THE UNION
In a sequel to "XXX," Samuel L. Jackson recruits a new agent (Ice Cube). Directed by Lee Tamahori. Opening April 29. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

L'ATALANTE
Jean Vigo's only feature film, from 1934, transfigures the sooty metal of heavy industry and the strivings of its survivors with a romantic illumination so intense that the film is at once a great working-class drama, an exalted love story, a lusty comedy, and—without a single stage-bound contrivance—the most magical of musicals. The title refers to a river barge that plies the waterways of France with a crew of three: the earnest young captain Jean (Jean Dasté); old Jules (Michel Simon), a tattooed and wise goat-man with a woman in every port; and Toto (Louis Lefebvre), Jules's boy Friday. Jean marries Juliette (Dita Parlo), a village girl who quickly feels confined by the cigar-shaped can that is now her home. Irresistibly lured by an itinerant merchant's flirtatious song, she flees to Paris, but reconciliation was never swifter or sweeter. Vigo raises the ordinary charm of each moment to a dreamlike ecstasy of passion and stifled revolt: he celebrated life and embraced humanity with the desperate ardor of one who knew he was not long for them. At the age of twenty-nine, Vigo vainly fought on from his deathbed as executives recut, retitled, and rescored the film. This lovingly restored version, from 2001, is a treasure. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Museum of Modern Art; April 29-30.)

THE BEST OF YOUTH
Six hours is a long time to spend in the company of somebody else's family, although, to be fair, it beats having to spend six hours in the company of one's own. Thanks to the director Marco Tullio Giordana, we are granted access to the Caratis, a fictional Roman clan, whose story, starting in 1966, covers more than thirty years and shows in two blocks of three hours. We follow the aging of the Carati parents and the progress of their four children—above all, of Nicola (Luigi Lo Cascio), smiling and slightly guarded, who grows up to be a psychologist, and of his handsome brother Matteo (Alessio Boni), whose rage for order finds him joining the police. When Nicola's partner, Giulia (Sonia Bergamasco)—her political principles as severe as her cheekbones—walks out on him and joins a terrorist cell, the stage is set for confrontation; to Giordana's credit, such clashes do not feel like a contrivance. The pace of the work, more leisurely than sluggish, allows the characters to clasp and hold our attention, to show as much bafflement as decisiveness, and to be brushed, rather than overwhelmed, by the major motions of history. In Italian, though, given the symphonic range of hand movements on display, the subtitles are largely redundant.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/25/05.) (Cinema Village.)

ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM
A mediocre documentary about the rise, fall, and utter disintegration of the Houston-based energy outfit that hid its debts in paper companies, colluded with an outside accounting firm, and managed for years to con the press, the financial community, and investors. There are a

TABLES FOR TWO
APPLEWOOD

501 11th St., Brooklyn (718-768-2044)—This Park Slope restaurant, on a quiet block midway between Prospect Park and the clamorous eateries of Fifth Avenue, gives the thirtysomethings who can afford to pay too much for apartments, strollers, and private school an aspirational neighborhood spot where they can spend their green freely and go green at the same time. Owned by David and Laura Shea (he is the chef, and she manages the restaurant), Applewood serves produce that is mostly locally grown and meat and poultry that are free of hormones and antibiotics. (In keeping with the close-to-nature ethos is the sight of Laura sailing between the clatter of the kitchen and the chatter of the front room with her six-month-old baby, Tatum, strapped to her front in a sling.)

A good way to start your meal is with a plate of four artisanal cheeses—each of the cheeses has so much snap and body that four people can easily share. A simple salad of greens is amplified by crunchy hazelnuts, dried cherries, and plump cloves of roasted garlic; garlic also plays a welcome role in the wild-mushroom ragout, which is surrounded by a little moat of mascarpone polenta. The waitresses—no waiters were in sight on a recent, busy Friday night; there is something chick-flicky about the place—can recommend a good wine to go with whatever you order, from a far-ranging list.

Comfort food knows no season, and the potato-and-morel pavé is a dish you'll want to snuggle with even as the weather is getting warmer. The earthy concoction is topped by a cascade of green spring peas; though it is saltier than it should be, it is delicious. The roasted lamb loin is a worthy choice, but have a detailed conversation with your waitress over definitions of doneness; the chef's "medium" might well be your "too rare for me—can you take it back and cook it a little more?" The desserts, like the grapefruit brûlée with sparkling-wine sorbet, are fresh tasting and uplifting; the roasted apple slices come with a scoop of innocent-looking but heady juniper-berry ice cream. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays for dinner and Sundays for brunch. Entrées $18-$24.)

—*Nancy Franklin*

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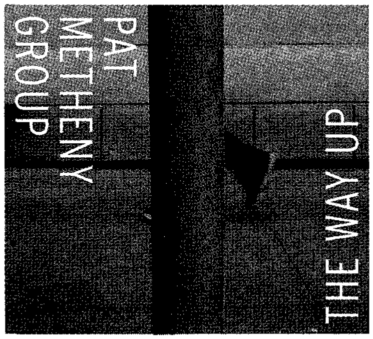

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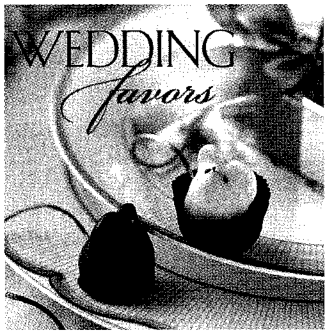

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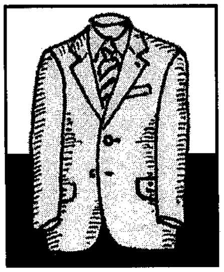

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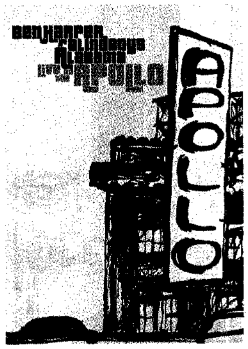

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few startling moments—the executives Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling rousing Enron employees with inane and fraudulent boasts as the company was falling apart, an audiotape of conversations between Enron electricity traders merrily fleecing the state of California during its energy crisis. But much of the material is familiar, and the director, Alex Gibney, indulges in lazy cinematic sarcasm rather than telling us what we want to know: how the company worked when it was a legitimate firm; when, exactly, it began to go bad; and what the paper "entities" set up by the convicted chief financial officer Andrew Fastow actually did or were supposed to do. Based on the excellent 2004 book by the reporters Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind, who offer lucid commentary in the movie but cannot save it from being a poor substitute for their own hard work.—*David Denby* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

FEVER PITCH

A conventional Farrelly-brothers comedy that plugs into something curious along the way. Jimmy Fallon plays a joke-happy Boston schoolteacher who successfully woos Drew Barrymore's high-flying corporate consultant, only to lose her to his obsession with the Boston Red Sox. The teacher's house, down to the Yankee toilet paper, is a Sox mausoleum; he spends his summers in a box seat passed down by his uncle, surrounded by fans who have been muttering the same curses and masochistic riffs for decades. The filmmakers are split between making the Sox obsession a lovably funny quirk and suggesting that it's haplessly infantile. Plotted against the 2004 season, the movie ends with the team's surprise World Series victory. One doesn't expect a sequel in which Sox fans have come down from the grandeur of endless defeat and are forced to confront the banality of success.—*D.D.* (4/18/05) (In wide release.)

THE INTERPRETER

The new Sydney Pollack movie is set at the United Nations: not the bear pit of recent wrangling but a barely ruffled pool of international good will. Among its many altruists is Silvia Broome (Nicole Kidman), an interpreter who was raised in Africa. One night, she hears what she believes to be the murmurings of a plot: a plan to kill Edmond Zuwanie (Earl Cameron), the murderous president of Matobo, a fictitious African republic. She has cause to hate him, but does that make her a suspect as well as a witness? On her case is Keller (Sean Penn), a Secret Service agent and purveyor of universal sadness. He starts to investigate Silvia and inches toward the verge of falling in love; if the movie were ten hours long, one could easily picture the two of them throwing caution to the wind and going out for a drink. The plot, meanwhile, follows an unusual course, rising to a tense and wiry scene involving a baddie, a bomb, and a bus, but slumping to a thrill-free finale, whose credibility will explode if you say the words "swipe card" out loud. With Catherine Keener, thank heaven, as a fellow-agent, and the only person present to see the joke.—*A.L.* (4/25/05) (In wide release.)

KONTROLL

This raucous and tender first film by the young Hungarian-American director Nimród Antal is set entirely in the Budapest subway, which is run on the honor system. Antal's heroes are a mangy bunch of inspectors who patrol the trains and platforms, hoping to collect tickets or cash from the passengers, most of whom walk away from them, or spit in their faces, or curse and rough them up. In response to the battering they receive, the men have become wild eccentrics, manic depressives, and brawlers. The movie is not meant to be taken literally; it's a phantasmagoria and a case of American rhythm and pace wedded to a European sensibility. Working without digital painting of any sort (the budget was eight hundred thousand dollars), Antal and his cinematographer, Gyula Pados, sustain moods of foreboding and mad exhilaration mainly through camera movement and lighting. With Sándor Csányi as Bulcsú, the leader of the most likable crew of ticket-takers, a man who wanders around the tunnels when the subway shuts down and eventually does battle with Death itself.—*D.D.* (4/18/05) (Village East Cinemas.)

KUNG FU HUSTLE

The director Stephen Chow (he also wrote, produced, and stars) assembled this fantastic martial-arts film as cleverly as Tex Avery approached animation. Characters run down the road at superspeed, take flowerpots to the head without a whimper, and fly through the air deliriously. The plot, about a group of over-the-hill, tenement-living kung-fu masters with superpowers who fight a group of axe-wielding gangsters, is anarchic; the cast of Hong Kong actors is comic perfection, especially Yuen Qiu (who plays a hair-curlered, cigarette-smoking landlady). The computer-enhanced stunt work is astonishing, but it's Chow's ability to find the humor in his flights of fancy that's truly distinctive.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

LITTLE FUGITIVE

As its core, this pioneering independent film from 1953 is just an urban heart-warmer, but it has a fresh, gritty surface and a Grade-A horror-comic hook: a seven-year-old boy (Richie Andrusco), believing that he fatally shot his older brother, goes on the lam. Although the tension peaks when the boy pulls the trigger, that moment epitomizes claustrophobic mean-street queasiness and keeps the rest of the film from seeming sappy. Morris Engel, the cinematographer, who shares the writing and directing credits with Ruth Orkin (his wife) and Ray Ashley, uses a handheld camera to exploit all the wonders of Coney Island; the result is a lively essay on ball-toss games, deposit pop bottles, pony rides, and human midsections of all varieties as seen from a four-footer's perspective. Truffaut paid homage to it as an inspiration for the French New Wave—and no wonder. This valuable record of love and pain on the beach captures unique vignettes, like that of a pair of lovers staking out a spot on the sand, then hiding their heads under a towel as they snuggle and smooch.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of the Moving Image; April 27-30.)

PALINDROMES

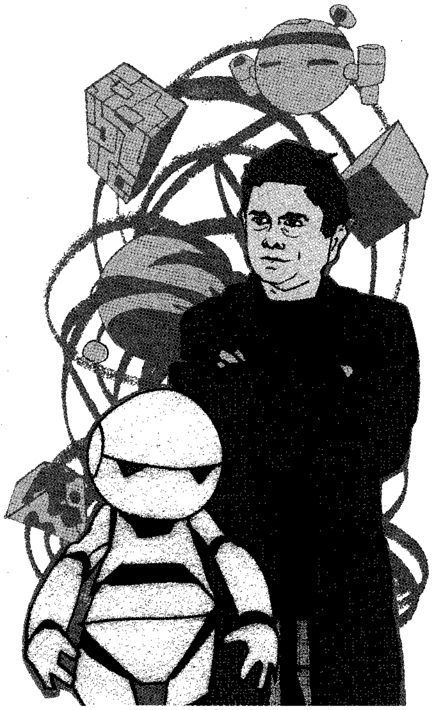
A would-be outrage from the writer-director Todd Solondz that isn't forceful enough to get upset about. A thirteen-year-old girl from the New Jersey suburbs, Aviva, wants desperately to get pregnant and repeatedly begs a teen-age boy and a grown man to sleep with her. In the different sequences, Aviva is played by different actresses, including Jennifer Jason Leigh, who is forty-three—an attempt, apparently, to universalize the theme. The effect, however, is to end any possible emotional involvement in the material. At one point, Aviva falls into the hands of Christian right-to-lifers who take care of the lame, the halt, and the blind while plotting to murder a doctor who performs abortions. But the tone of this sequence falls uneasily between black comedy and a Diane Arbus-like fascination with the deformed; one doesn't know how to react to it. Both the satirical and the genuinely charitable intentions are weakened by hipster affectlessness: everyone in the picture is drab or stupid, and the movie itself is listless. With Ellen Barkin and Richard Masur as Aviva's anxious-to-do-right suburban parents.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SAHARA

Clive Cussler's franchise novel about the adventurers Dirk Pitt (Matthew McConaughey) and Al Giordino (Steve Zahn) gets the big-bucks treatment in the director Breck Eisner's Indiana Jones-style romp. The overstuffed plot, a Cussler trademark, concerns a missing Civil War ship, a beautiful W.H.O. doctor (Penélope Cruz), and, of course, buried treasure. McConaughey gives Pitt an irresistible masculine charm and energy that helps link the plot together, and Zahn brings a joyous, look-at-me spontaneity to the action. Their performances complement and support each other, and Eisner, who has a great eye for location and detail, keeps the whole whirligig plot turning with lots of pop and lots of corn. A treat.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

SIN CITY

A few strands of melodrama have been pulled from Frank Miller's graphic novels and plaited together—just about—into a coherent comic-strip film. Miller himself co-directs, in collaboration with Robert Rodriguez (plus a little help from Quentin Tarantino), and there is certainly no letup, or pulled punches, in the heightening of style. The movie is in monochrome, splashed with occasional color, and the sheer force of overkill—the ear-crunching sound level, the disturbingly joyful violence—turns a sequence of horrific events into a stream of unfeeling comedy. The cast is a blast, including Bruce Willis, Michael Madsen, Clive Owen, Benicio Del Toro, a bewitching Carla Gugino, and a renascent Mickey Rourke, and most of them enter with sweat and gusto into the spirit of the thing—fortunately so, for without such eagerness the movie would feel merely cruel. What it has to tell us of life, let alone suffering, beyond the savage enchantment of the movies could be written on the head of a bullet.—*A.L.* (4/11/05) (In wide release.)



Martin Freeman in "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," opening April 29.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

THE UPSIDE OF ANGER

Joan Allen, lurching into rooms and then speaking with the weird explicitness of an alcoholic trying to maintain control, is Terry Wolfmeyer, a suburban housewife who has been abandoned by her husband; Kevin Costner is Denny Davis, a sheepish retired baseball player whose hand always clutches a beer bottle. She's overdefined; he's undefined; and in the gaps between Terry's faltering attempts to raise her four beautiful, cranky daughters, Terry and Denny have an occasional meeting in bed. This domestic comedy, written and directed by Mike Binder (who performs well as Denny's sleazebag friend), takes its time and establishes a natural rhythm of quarrels, reconciliations, and serious talk. As the rancorous Terry, who can't stop herself from telling people off, Allen blooms into a great angry comedienne. With Evan Rachel Wood, Erika Christensen, Keri Russell, and Alicia Witt as the fab Wolfmeyer girls.—*D.D.* (4/4/05) (In wide release.)

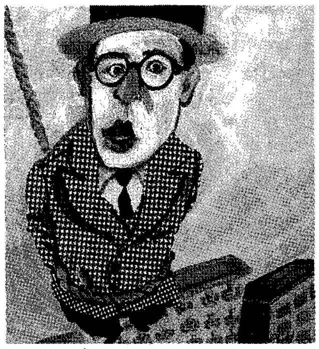
Also Playing

A LOT LIKE LOVE: In wide release. **DOWNFALL:** Film Forum (2/14 & 21/05). **LOOK AT ME:** In wide release (4/4/05). **MELINDA AND MELINDA:** In wide release (3/21/05).

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SILENCE IS GOLDEN

He never attained the poetic heights of Chaplin, the melancholy beauty of Keaton, or the baby-faced perversity of Harry Langdon, but Harold Lloyd, whose work is currently being given a retrospective at Film Forum, will always be their equal as a silent comic. He's the normal one, the polite young man in a suit and horn-rimmed glasses who just wants to talk to his girl or walk across the room without getting into trouble. The simplicity of his desires makes the menacing interference of the world that much more gratuitous—a series of ridiculous obstacles that must be overcome by dogged persistence and practical ingenuity. In the 1923 feature "Why Worry?" (showing April 27-28), Lloyd is a wealthy young twit, Harold Van Pelham, who takes a vacation on the island of Paradiso, where the inhabitants, all in enormous hats, alternate between unmoving sloth and gangsterish revolution. When a peasant gets knocked on the head and collapses into a woman's arms, the twit thinks the two of them are doing an exotic tango for his benefit and applauds. In the end, Lloyd always turned the world into his oyster.

—*David Denby*



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ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—"New Filmmakers." April 27 at 8: "Tom's Wife" (2005, Alana Cash). ♦ "Films of the Situationist International." April 28 and April 30 at 7: "The Society of the Spectacle" (1973, Guy Debord; in French). ♦ April 28 at 9 and April 30 at 5:30: "Guy Debord, His Art and His Times" (1994, Brigitte Cornand; in French). ♦ April 29 at 7 and May 1 at 5: "Venom and Eternity" (1950, Isidore Isou; in French). ♦ April 29 at 9 and May 1 at 7: "Can Dialectics Break Bricks?" (1973, René Vienet and Gerard Cohen; in French). ♦ April 30 at 9:30: "Howls for Sade" (1952, Debord; in French). ♦ May 1 at 9: "The Girls of Kamaré" (1974, Vienet; in French). ♦ "*The Onion* Presents." April 28 at 8: "Simian Shorts Program." ♦ "Essential Cinema." April 30 at 3: "Old and New" (1929, Sergei Eisenstein; silent, with Russian intertitles). ♦ May 1 at 2:30: "Alexander Nevsky" (1938, Eisenstein; in Russian).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—"Cinemachat with Elliott Stein." April 27 at 7: "Whatever Happened to Aunt Alice?" (1969, Lee H. Katzin; in English and German). ♦ "BAMcinématek Favorites." April 28 at 7: "The American Astronaut" (2001, Cory McAbee). ♦ May 2 at 5 and 7:30: "Brother to Brother" (2004, Rodney Evans). ♦ "Asian Cinevisions." April 29 at 6:30 and 9:30: "A Peck on the Cheek" (2002, Mani Ratnam; in Tamil and Sinhala). ♦ April 30 at 2 and 6:50: "The Hunter and the Hunted" (2004, Izuru Narushima; in Japanese). ♦ April 30 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity" (2002, Mina Shum; in English and Cantonese). ♦ May 1 at 2 and 6:50: "Men Suddenly in Black" (2003, Ho Cheung Ping; in Cantonese). ♦ May 1 at 4:30 and 9:15: "The Ride" (2003, Nathan Kurosawa). ♦ May 3-8: "Filmland: Recent Finnish Film." May 3 at 7:30: "Screaming Men" (2003, Mika Ronkainen; in English and Finnish).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through May 17: The films of Harold Lloyd. April 27-28 at 1, 4:15, and 7:30: "Why Worry?" (1923, Fred C. Newmeyer and Sam Taylor; silent). ♦ April 27-28 at 2:20, 5:35, and 8:50: "Movie Crazy" (1932, Clyde Bruckman). ♦ April 29-30 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Speedy" (1928, Ted Wilde; silent). ♦ May 1-2 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:25, and 9:30: "Girl Shy" (1924, Newmeyer and Taylor; silent). ♦ May 3 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "Hot Water" (1924, Newmeyer and Taylor; silent). ♦ May 3 at 2:15, 5:15, and 8:15: "Professor Beware" (1938, Elliott Nugent).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Occupation of France Series." May 3 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Safe Conduct" (2002, Bertrand Tavernier; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"112 Years of Cinema." April 27 at 5:45: "Hoodoo Ann" (1916, Lloyd Ingraham; silent). ♦ April 28 at 5: "A Perfect World" (1993, Clint Eastwood). ♦ April 28 at 7:45: "Ace in the Hole" (1951, Billy Wilder). ♦ April 30 at 2: "Citizen Kane" (1941, Orson Welles). ♦ April 30 at 5: "The House of Mirth" (2000, Terence Davies). ♦ April 30 at 7:45: "The Band Wagon" (1953, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ May 1 at 2: "The Night of the Hunter" (1955, Charles Laughton). ♦ May 1 at 2: "Four More Years" (1972, TVTV). ♦ May 1 at 5: "All My Babies" (1953, George C. Stoney). ♦ May 1 at 5: "The Toll Gate" (1920, Lambert Hillyer). ♦ May 2 at 5:30: "Straight Shooting" (1917, John Ford; silent). ♦ May 2 at 6: "Elephant Boy" (1937, Robert Flaherty and Zoltan Korda). ♦ "Louis Feuillade: A Sampling of a Master." April 27 at 6: "Les Vampires: Episodes 6-10" (1915; silent). ♦ "Sundance at MOMA: Sundance Film Festival Shorts." April 27 at 7:45: "Short Films, Big Winners." ♦ April 29 at 8:30: "Flexing the Form." ♦ Special screenings. April 28 at 7 and April 30 at 8: "Olive Thomas: Everybody's Sweetheart" (2004, Andie Hicks) and "The Flapper" (1920, Alan Crosland; silent). ♦ "Centenary of Jean Vigo." All films are in French. April 29 at 6 and April 30 at 5: "L'Atalante" (†). ♦ April 29 at 8:30 and April 30 at 3: "À Propos de Nice" (1930) and "Zéro de Conduite" (1933). ♦ Special fiftieth-anniversary screening. May 2 at 7:30: "Pather Panchali" (1955, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali). ♦ Special screening. May 2 at 8: "Free to Go" (2003, Andrew Noren).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Repertory nights. April 29 at 7:30 and April 30-May 1 at 6:30: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy; in French). ♦ Through May 8: "Candid Cameras: Real Life on Film." April 30 at 2: "David Holzman's Diary" (1967, Jim McBride). ♦ April 30 at 3:30: "Sherman's March" (1986, Ross McElwee). ♦ May 1 at 2: "Seventeen" (1983, Joel DeMott and Jeff Kreines). ♦ "Spring Recess Family Matinees." April 27-29 at 1:30 and April 30 at 12: "Little Fugitive" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. April 29-30: "Napoleon Dynamite" (2004, Jared Hess).

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

The festival, which runs through May 1, shows more than two hundred and fifty films at several venues. See www.tribecafilmfestival.org for locations and for a complete schedule. (212-321-7400) Some highlights follow.—April 27 at 2: "The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part I: The Moab Story" (2003, Peter Greenaway). ♦ April 27 at 3:45 and April 30 at 8:15: "2046" (2004, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese, Japanese, and Mandarin). ♦ April 27 at 8, April 30 at 7, and May 1 at 6: "The Muppets' Wizard of Oz" (2005, Kirk R. Thatcher). ♦ April 27 at 8:45, April 28 at 1, and April 30 at 4:15: "The Axe" (2005, Costa-Gavras; in French). ♦ April 27 at 10 and April 28 at 2:15: "The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part II: Vaux to the Sea" (2004, Greenaway). ♦ April 27 at 11:30 and April 30 at 9:45: "9 Songs" (2004, Michael Winterbottom). ♦ April 28 at 9:30, April 29 at 11:45, April 30 at midnight, and May 1 at 6: "Night Watch" (2004, Timur Bekmambetov; in Russian). ♦ April 28 at 10 and April 29 at 2:30: "The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part III: From Sark to the Finish" (2004, Greenaway). ♦ April 29 at 8: "Mad Hot Ballroom" (2005, Marilyn Agrelo). ♦ April 30 at 1: "Fierce People" (2005, Griffin Dunne). ♦ April 30 at 5:30: "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 2 1/2" (2005, William Greaves).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The Twelfth New York African Film Festival. April 27 at 1: "Keepers of Memory" (2004, Eric Kabera; in Kinyarwanda). ♦ April 27 at 2:45: "Alhaki" (1998, Usa Galadima; in Hausa). ♦ April 27 at 5: "Born Into Struggle" (2004, Rehad Desai). ♦ April 27 at 7: "Story of a Beautiful Country" (2004, Khalo Matabane). ♦ April 27 at 9 and April 28 at 4:30: "Bronx-Barbès" (2000, Elaine de Latour; in French and Nushi). ♦ April 28 at 1: "Silmande" (1998, Pierre Yameogo; in French, Mooré, and Arabic). ♦ April 28 at 2:45: "The Colonial Misunderstanding" (2004, Jean-Marie Teno; in English, French, and German). ♦ Special screening. April 28 at 7:30: "Belle de Jour" (1967, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ "The Unforgettable Comedy of Massimo Troisi." All films are in Italian. April 29 at 2 and 6:30 and May 1 at 8:45: "I'm Starting from Three" (1981, Troisi). ♦ April 29 at 4:15, April 30 at 2, and May 1 at 6:30: "Sorry for the Delay" (1983, Troisi). ♦ April 29 at 8:45, April 30 at 6:30, and May 1 at 4:15: "The Postman" (1994, Michael Radford). ♦ April 30 at 4:15 and 8:45 and May 2 at 2: "Nothing Left to Do But Cry" (1985, Troisi and Roberto Benigni). ♦ May 1 at 2 and May 2 at 6:30: "I Thought It Was Love" (1992, Troisi). ♦ May 2 at 4:15 and 8:45 and May 3 at 1: "The Ways of the Lord Are Limited" (1987, Troisi).

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READINGS AND TALKS

"STORIES FROM THE ISLAMIC WORLD"
Words Without Borders, an online magazine dedicated to literature from around the globe, and "Selected Shorts," the long-running Symphony Space series in which actors read short stories, presents Shohreh Aghdashloo (from the movie "House of Sand and Fog"), Aasif Mandvi (who was recently in "Homebody/Kabul," at BAM), and Arian Moayed (also of "Homebody/Kabul") reading works by Kader Abdolah, François Devenne, and Saadat Hasan Manto. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-1414. April 27 at 6:30.)

"ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?"
The Rotunda Gallery's current show takes a loose, tongue-in-cheek look at the idea of amusement, with such pieces as a startlingly graceful photograph of jellyfish, oil paintings of nuns smoking cigarettes, and a three-minute silent video loop of an artist, Traci Tullius, getting hit on the head by a book, a shoe, a ball, and other objects. On April 27 at 7, the writer Mike Albo and the sword swallower Heather Holiday join other personalities from the local literary and arts worlds for an evening of wordplay and performance. (33 Clinton St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. For reservations, which are required, call 718-875-4047, ext. 11.)

POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA AWARDS CEREMONY
Marie Ponsot, the recipient of the 2005 Frost Medal, an award given in recognition of a lifetime dedicated to poetry, will read from her work and address the winners of the Society's other annual awards. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628. April 28 at 7.)

PETE'S CANDY STORE READING SERIES
Ben Greenman, an editor at this magazine and the author of the short-story collection "Superbad" and the novel "Superworse," and the short-story writer Dika Lam will read in the back room of this Williamsburg watering hole. (709 Lorimer St., Brooklyn. 718-302-3770. April 28 at 7:30.)

"OXFORD AMERICAN" READING
The literary quarterly's latest issue is devoted to the subject of food, and from their perspective that means everything Southern, from fried foods to ice. On May 1 at 4:30, Roy Blount, Jr., Pete Wells, and Lolis Eric Elie join the issue's guest editor, John T. Edge, for what promises to be a filling afternoon. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

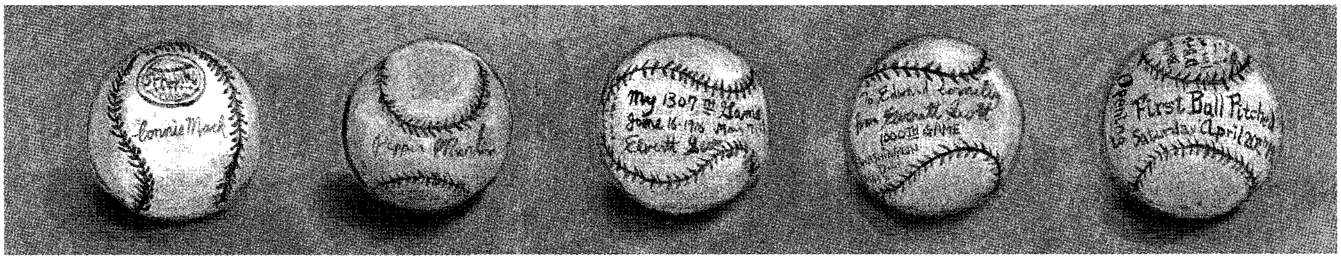
DAVID HERLIHY
The author of the newly published monograph "Bicycle: The History" presents an illustrated lecture on the nineteenth-century innovation that gave Henry Ford and the Wright brothers their start. (Coliseum Books, 11 W. 42nd St. No tickets necessary. May 2 at 6:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"WÄNDE WENDE (WALLS CHANGE)"
Peter Cunningham, a noted photographer of entertainers (a brief list of his subjects runs from Bruce Springsteen and Madonna to the Broadway casts of "Little Shop of Horrors" and "Les Misérables"), has developed a personal medium that he calls "still film," in which a series of images are projected onto three screens, accompanied by an original score. These visual poems are decidedly more ambitious than his celebrity work; in the past they've consisted of essays on nature and consumerism. He shot his latest still film in Berlin, and it addresses, in a stunningly colorful fashion, how the walls that hem us in are not necessarily made of concrete. The music this evening is provided live by the Brooklyn-based, Eurocentric café-rock ensemble Barbez. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 212-219-3055. April 29 at 8.)

"SAKURA MATSURI"
The tradition of celebrating cherry blossoms originated in Japan, but it's not necessary to travel far to enjoy their ephemeral beauty. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden's esplanade is approaching full flower, and its annual festival includes taiko drumming, flower arranging, and tea ceremonies. The Yankees and the Mets may have long since had their home openers, but it's not really spring until a tree blooms in Brooklyn. (Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway. 718-623-7200. April 30-May 1.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
A sale of photographs at **Sotheby's** on April 27 features works by Diane Arbus (including a single, unnerving painting, "The Angel Gabriel"), along with familiar images by Kertész, Newton, and Avedon; the afternoon session begins with nine striking photograms—images created by placing objects on light-sensitive paper and exposing them to a light source—by Moholy-Nagy. An auction of prints follows on April 29-30; among the highlights are a complete set of the posters of Toulouse-Lautrec and a haunting Munch lithograph ("The Sick Child I"), as well as works by Picasso, Warhol, and Johns. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ A whiff of nostalgia hovers over an impressive auction of children's books at **Christie's** (April 27), featuring such childhood companions as Christopher Robin, the Wizard of Oz, and Peter Pan; a sale of prints follows on May 3-4. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



YUKO SHIMIZU

ON THE HORIZON

NIGHT LIFE
ROSANNE CASH
May 13

Cash's all-acoustic shows have been selling out the small theatre at the Rubin Museum of Art since she started the series last fall. She is usually joined by a special guest, and she always develops a theme based on the museum's Himalayan art. Her final show of the spring season, which is dedicated to the idea of numbers, both auspicious and inauspicious, is scheduled for the year's only Friday the 13th. (212-620-5000, ext. 344.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
"CHAPLINOPERAS"
May 24

Jonathan Nott conducts the Ensemble Intercontemporain of Paris in "ChaplinOperas," which features new scores for three Chaplin films ("Easy Street," "The Immigrant," and "The Adventurer") by the British composer Benedict Mason, who began as a filmmaker. (Rose Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

ABOVE & BEYOND
SPORTS AUCTION
June 10

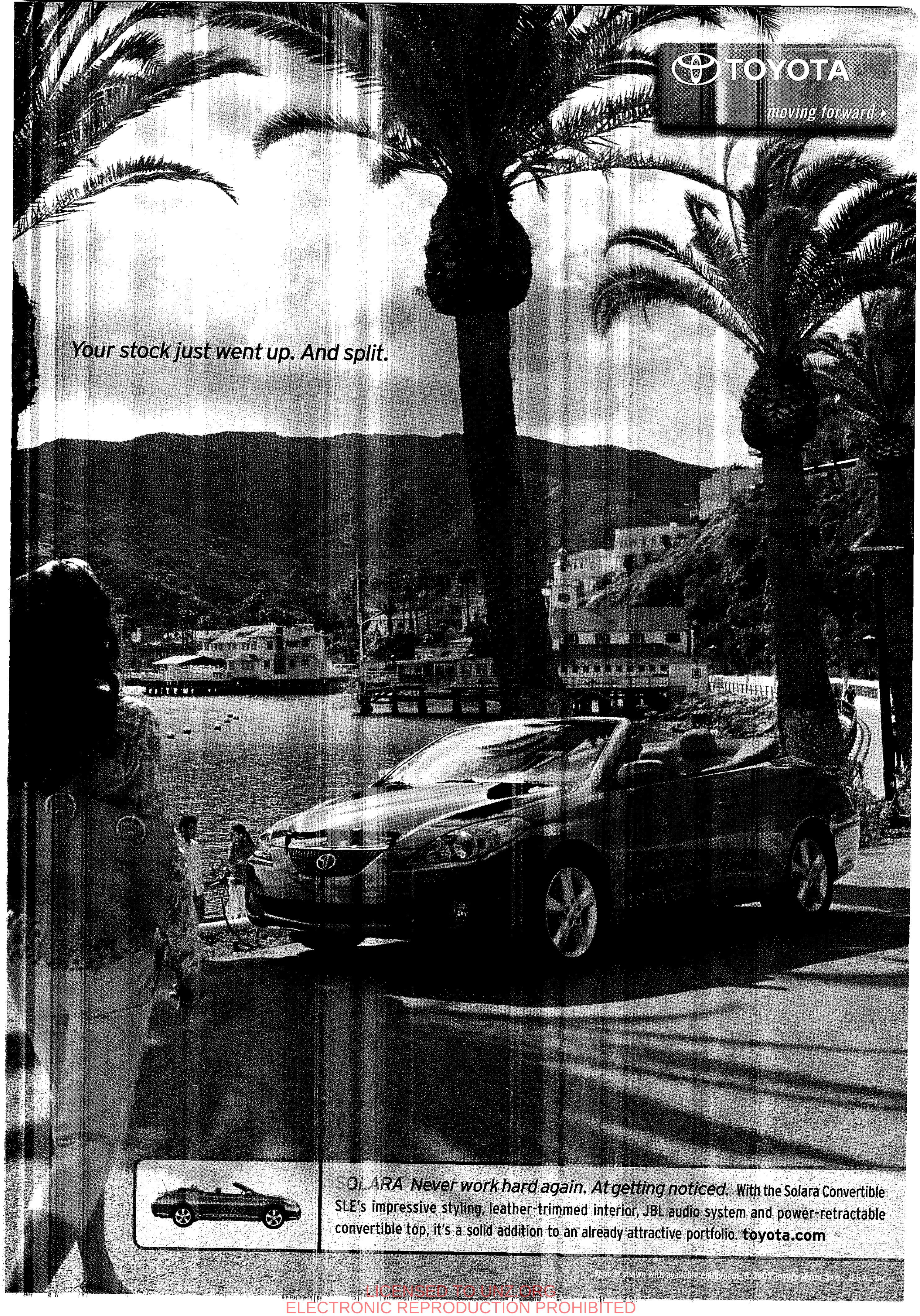
Sotheby's large auction of sports memorabilia and cards includes the 1919 contract that sent Babe Ruth from the Red Sox to the Yankees and the first ball thrown at the grand opening of Fenway Park, in 1912; all items will be on public exhibition beginning June 4. (212-606-7000.)

ART
ROBERT SMITHSON
June 23-Oct., 2005

Best known for his "Spiral Jetty" earthwork, Smithson will be honored with a retrospective at the Whitney that will include little-known figurative drawings and paintings from the late fifties and early sixties. (212-570-3676.)

THE THEATRE
"SLEEPING BEAUTY"
July 12-July 16

In the puppeteer Basil Twist's last work, "Symphonie Fantastique," puppeteers in wetsuits guided phantasmagoric fabrics through a tank of water. His new opera, "La Bella Dormente nel Bosco" ("Sleeping Beauty"), is set to Respighi and puts twelve puppeteers to work manipulating seventy-five specially designed puppets. The event will take place on the opening night of the Lincoln Center Festival, along with a revival of Merce Cunningham's "Ocean." (212-721-6500.)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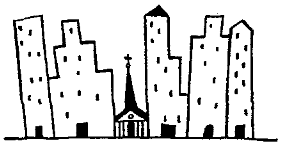
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

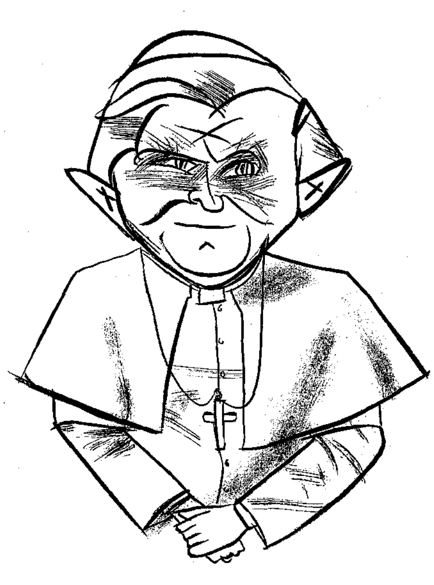
COMMENT
HOLY ORDERS



Cardinals of the Church of Rome do not normally hold press conferences to spin their choices, but that is precisely what many of them did last Wednesday, less than a day after they named Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and arguably the most powerful person in the Vatican, to St. Peter's chair. They wanted the world to know that Ratzinger has a "great heart," that he is "compassionate," "collegial," even "shy"—that, in fact, it was shyness and humility that had made him seem so strict and pitiless in the job of doctrinal enforcer that he held for the past quarter of a century.

In his homily to his fellow-cardinals, on the first morning of their conclave, Cardinal Ratzinger had warned that modern society was threatened by a "dictatorship of relativism." But it might have been more accurate to say that it is threatened by a dictatorship of absolutisms, including his own. This is a world in the tightening grip of orthodoxy, of literal "truths" and crusading certainties, and early last week it was the hope of many Catholics that the Church would begin to break that grip and return to them the right to exercise their own consciences on matters that do not concern faith so much as the realities of their intimate lives: sexuality, celibacy, choice, the use of condoms in AIDS-ridden Africa, the use of birth control in the favelas and shantytowns of Central and South America, the acknowledgment that stem-cell research might conceivably be a gift from God.

The question of God and conscience, or, rather, the relation between God and conscience—the central question of Vatican II, and, as such, the source of immense hope to young Catholics in the nineteen-sixties and seventies—was so "deconstructed" (to risk a relativist term) in the twenty-six years of John Paul II's papacy that raising it now constitutes a kind of doctrinal heresy. Ratzinger maintained, with his friend and predecessor, that a well-ordered conscience is one that submits to the authority of the magisterium. So it is understandable that today those Catholics are asking who exactly is, and was, Joseph Ratzinger. Was he the Pope's man, the unbending instrument of John Paul II's insistent orthodoxy, or was he, at least in part, the motor of that orthodoxy, especially in the Pontiff's last years?



Most Popes of the last century—even John Paul II, for all his groundwork as a priest in Communist Poland—were elevated to that office from relative anonymity. Ratzinger does not have that advantage. He has been well known to Catholic intellectuals since the nineteen-seventies, when he battled Hans Küng, the liberal Swiss theologian and his mentor at the University of Tübingen, on questions of doctrinal dissension, and, as Archbishop of Munich, was instrumental in having Küng barred from teaching Catholic theology. And, of course, he has been very well known to most Catholics since the early eighties, when the Pope installed him at the Vatican. His agenda, or his orders, were always clear. During his first ten years as Prefect, the Jesuits were censured for challenging papal teachings on contraception, parts of their constitution were suspended, and their Vicar General, Vincent O'Keefe, a passionate advocate for social justice, was removed. The reactionary lay order Opus Dei was transformed into a "personal prelature" accountable directly to the Pope. The dioceses of progressive Latin-American bishops were gerrymandered out of existence, liberation

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

theologians like Leonardo Boff were called to Rome and silenced as "Marxists" (they were, more accurately, Christian-communitarian evangelists), and the priests they had trained, who were responsible for an ebullient Catholic revival in Latin America, were ordered back into the fold of tradition and obedience. The relative autonomy of the North American bishops' conference was ended, and its most progressive members—most famously Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, of Chicago—were marginalized.

If the Vatican's project in the eighties was to purge its clergy, its nineties project was to purge its teachings of ambiguity. The dogma of papal infallibility, which dates only from 1870, has been invoked just once since then, in 1950, when Pius XII proclaimed the "truth" of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. But in the years of John Paul II's papacy there was a conflation of the notion of infallibility and what the Church calls "definitive teachings." The result was that John Paul II's teachings often carried the imperative of infallibility, and Cardinal Ratzinger's theological imprimatur on those teachings, together with his power to enforce them, effectively ended the discussion.

These issues were more important to the cardinals than the new Pope's age or whether he was Italian, or European, or from Latin America or Africa. There are a hundred and eighty-three cardinals, but no cardinal over the age of eighty may vote, and, of the hundred and fifteen who did, all but two owed their appointments to John Paul II. It was probably never in doubt whom they would choose. Joseph Ratzinger speaks for them, and whatever he says about "waves" battering at the boat of the true faith—globalism, feminism, individualism, desire, homosexuality ("an objective disorder"), demands for the ordination of women, mysticism, "gravely deficient" sects, Turkish Muslims in Christian Europe—those words put a full stop to the opening up of the Church of Rome that we still call Vatican II. In the past few days, Benedict XVI has promised the world dialogue and reconciliation, but at the same time he has reappointed the Vatican team that, with him, brought us the spectacle of suffering and death that ended with the funeral of John Paul and secured the veneration, if not the speedy sanctification, of that faithful and controlling Pontiff. ("This is a long way from three people at the foot of the Cross," one ex-Jesuit remarked last week, not long after Benedict XVI appeared for the first time in his papal vestments.) Most of the Cardinals wanted a continuum of that always spectacular reign. And they wanted a continued enforcement of its most conservative dicta—which may be why they are talking now about cutting their losses for the advantages of a smaller, "purer" Church. But, from what we know, the early Church was a place of risk and debate. They should remember that, too.

—*Jane Kramer*

REVENUE DEPT.
NEW HACK CITY

Certain natives blanched at the revelation, a couple of months ago, that the city's new Marketing department had applied for a trademark for the slogan "the World's Second Home," in reference to New York. Why aim so low?

Actually, from a marketing perspective, New York City ranks thirteenth, behind such robust brands as Harley-Davidson, Oprah Winfrey, and Disney, according to Young & Rubicam. And as for its preëxisting slogans, well, "the Big Apple" is in the public domain. "The City That Never Sleeps"? Citigroup owns "the Citi Never Sleeps." So what's wrong with adding a new nickname, in the interest of making a buck?

It was in that same spirit of entrepreneurship and brand extension that city marketers recently commissioned a new, "iconic" taxi-medallion design, the first step in a larger plan to "build equity" in the Taxi and Limousine Commission. (New York City Cab Company, New York City Taxi Cab: these names pretty much belong to the New York-New York casino, in Las Vegas.) The medallion is not just a license to operate a cab and a franchise worth hundreds of thousands of dollars but also a tin plate that is bolted onto a cab's hood. Sometime in the next month or so, the T.L.C. will begin installing these medallions on its twelve thousand licensed taxis, but for those who can't wait to see the new look up close—for those who are even aware of what the old look was—there is good news: T-shirts and caps emblazoned with the new medallion are already on sale at the New York City Store, on Centre Street, or at the Visitor Information Center, on Seventh Avenue. (Also available: life-size cardboard cut-outs of Jason Giambi; manhole-cover floor mats, made from recycled truck tires; shiny Statue of Liberty gloves.)

"If you look at past medallions, they really weren't anything that you'd want to put on a shirt or a hat and brag about in any way," Joseph Perello, the city's chief marketing officer, said the other day. "But the designer really looked back into the twenties and thirties to the hacks that were used then. Hack—that's not a derogatory statement, by the way." ("Hack" is short for "hackney," meaning a horse for hire; medallions used to be engraved with the words "Licensed Public Hack.")

Given that the mandate was to capture the romance, authenticity, and attitude of New York, some may be disappointed to learn that Ron Caruso, whose firm, Purepartner, designed the medallion, is from New Jersey. Nonetheless, Caruso did his homework, discovering, for example, that, whether or not they bragged about it, early taxi-drivers were required to wear their medallions on their hats (which, evidently, were also required).

From a branding standpoint, there are two proprietary components to the new medallion: its shape and its typography. The shape, Caruso said, is modelled on a shield, to convey authority, but with rounded corners to "make it more accessible." It looks a little like a bloated home plate. (Its horizontal proportions are meant to imply "solid, dependable character.") The typography takes after the 1923 medallion, with nods to the utilitarian typefaces found on old building signs.

Then, there are decorative flourishes—variations on the old Checker-cab checks. "We felt it was important that the T.L.C. still hold on to the equity that is in the Checker," Caruso said. "But we needed to stylize it, and we really tried to treat it more as a professional football team would." The bad news: the football logo he had in mind was that of the New England Patriots.

What stands out most, however, is an image of the Brooklyn Bridge that spans the medallion's lower half. It helps give the over-all design a kind of ersatz-retro feel ("classic but progressive" is the preferred description) that would not seem out of place at, say, a Las Vegas casino's interpretation of New York. A miniature version might even look sharp on one of those souvenir taxi replicas you can buy in Times Square (all of which, so far, are unlicensed). "We do know that the replica-vehicle category is hot," Perello said.

—*Ben McGrath*

DEPT. OF CELEBRATION
DRUNK MONK

There are only so many birthday-party venues where you wait around for the guest of honor in your socks. One of them is a Buddhist kung-fu temple. One night not long ago, about two hundred people left their shoes outside the door of the U.S.A. Shaolin Temple, on lower Broadway, and shuffled inside to await the arrival of Sifu Shi Yan Ming, a thirty-fourth-generation Shaolin fighting monk, whose forty-first birthday they intended to celebrate by drinking vast quantities of beer—or "special water," as Yan Ming likes to say.

The celebrants spanned an easy range of age, race, profession, and style: deli clerk, baby, Wesley Snipes, sociology professor, Masta Killa. The RZA, of the Wu-Tang Clan, who spent much of his childhood skipping school to watch kung-fu movies in Times Square, was there, wearing a Staten Island baseball jacket and cap. In a room where hair was fairly unpopular, you could spot Jim Jarmusch's tall, fluffy white head.

The students, dozens of whom were planning to stage a performance for their master (or *sifu*), were wearing orange or navy monk's robes. As they waited, they blithely performed amazing feats. Two women rolled over each other's back; another cartwheeled, no hands; a young man with long dreadlocks doodled in the air with a broadsword; another, head shaved, did a standing flip. The d.j., whose booth was in front of the sword rack, was wearing a yellow T-shirt bearing the temple's slogan in red: "More Chi! Train Harder!"

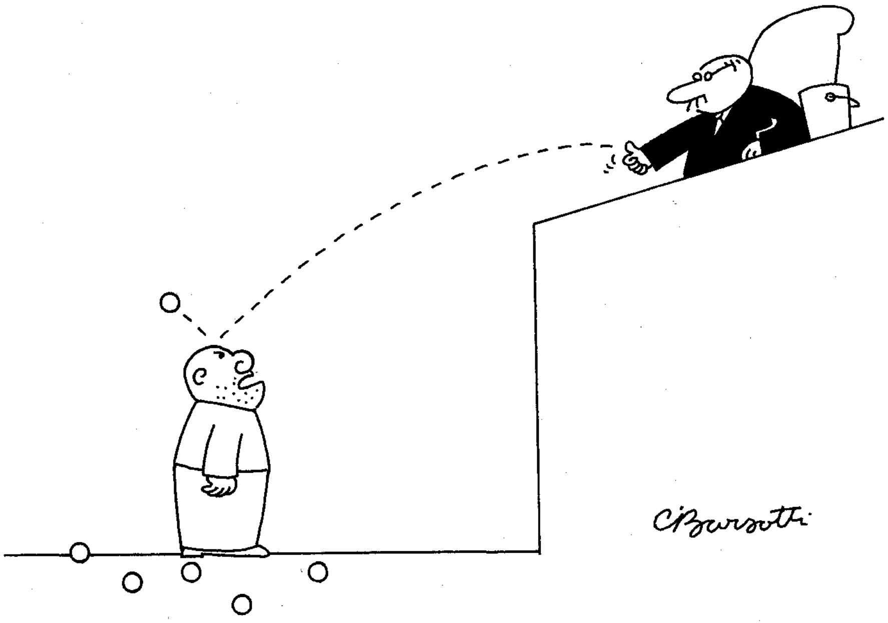
This is something Yan Ming yells all the time—along with "Merry Christmas!" and "Happy New Year!" In his view, every day is a cause for celebration, and everybody is "handsome." Before he was born, two brothers and one sister died of starvation. When Yan Ming fell extremely ill as a young child, his parents took him to the Shaolin Temple, in Henan Province, the birthplace of Ch'an Buddhism, and left him there, in the hope that Buddha might save his life. Under the monks' tutelage, the boy became a master of Shaolin kung fu. By the time he was seventeen, he had been trained to withstand a full-force strike to the groin. He can lick red-hot iron shovels, break bricks with his skull, fly above-ground upside down in full splits, and sleep standing on one leg. In 1992, in San Francisco, while on the first Shaolin Temple monks' tour of the United States, he defected and made his way to New York.

By 1995, Yan Ming had opened a temple on the Bowery, a cramped space without heat or electricity. That same year, he met Sophia Chang, a Korean-Canadian who was the manager of Ol' Dirty Bastard, a member of the Wu-Tang Clan. (Yan Ming and Chang have two children. Shaolin monks have an exemption, granted by an emperor whom they protected during the Tang dynasty, that effectively permits meat, alcohol, and sex.) She introduced him to the RZA at a record-release party. The Wu-Tang Clan's delight at meeting a real Shaolin monk lent Yan Ming some hip-hop cred, and before long he had moved to a bigger space, where he began training the Wu and many others in the Shaolin way.

His arrival at the birthday party was signalled by a burst of applause and shouts of the Buddhist greeting *"Amituofo!"* He entered from the stairwell wearing Comme des Garçons street clothes: navy shirt with an oversized black zipper and black pants. He took a seat front and center. The d.j. started a break beat, and the performance began. The students spun through choreographed fight sets, animal forms (eagle, snake, tiger, praying mantis), palm strikes, flying and spinning kicks, cartwheels, splits. When it was over, Yan Ming stood and said wholeheartedly, "I'm the luckiest *sifu* in the whole world!" Then he grinned. "Now, are you ready to train harder with the special water?"

The students took turns manning the bar—beer, sake, champagne ("very special water"). Nearby, friends made introductions to Yan Ming: "Yo yo, this is Pink," and, "This is my sexy bodyguard." The Shaolin tradition is to salute with the right hand, but, since Yan Ming was holding a bottle of champagne with that one, he raised his left. He filled people's paper cups: "Merry Christmas!" Chang, whose head was shaved, called out, "Dave Chappelle's been down there buzzing! Can someone go down and let him in? *Amituofo.*"

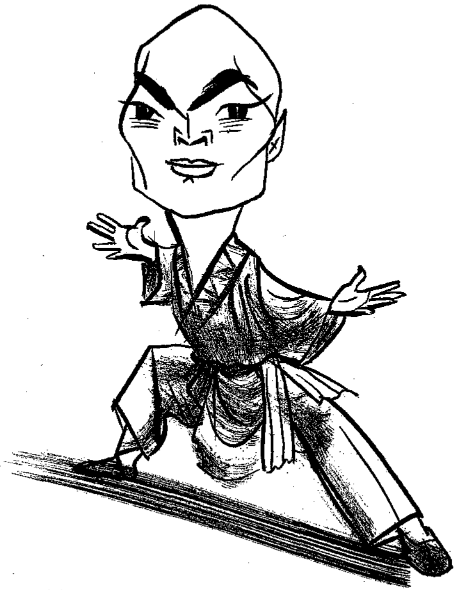
Out on the dance floor, Yan Ming moved, with almost any-guy imprecision, to the strains of "Mothafucka, what's wrong with you?" and "Can I kick it?" A dance circle formed, the monk staying



"And you wonder why people hate activist judges?"

clear of the center, and the kung-fu battles—like nonverbal rap battles—escalated to the point where one man jumped clear over the head of another.

Around midnight, the birthday cake came out, decorated with the words "Happy Birthday Handsome." By this time, Yan Ming had begun to lose his English. "Cut the cake! Cut the cake!" everyone chanted. A Wu-Tang Shaolin song played. Sifu Shi Yan Ming raised his left arm and, with full concentration, sliced the cake down the middle with a split-second kung-fu chop.



Sifu Shi Yan Ming

A few of the last guests to leave, hours later, found Yan Ming out in the rain on Broadway, buzzing to get back in. Bits of cake were stuck to his cheek. "Happy New Year!" he called out, as they held the door for him. "You are so handsome. Happy Birthday!"

—*Amy Goldwasser*

INK
THE WRITING WIFE

When Jackie Collins finally got around to updating her early-eighties classic, "Hollywood Wives," in 2001, she took care to insure that "Hollywood Wives: The New Generation" would reflect certain significant shifts in the culture of Los Angeles. To that end, Karen, Elaine, and Sadie, with their modern-dance classes, marabou-trimmed pajamas, and lunches at Ma Maison, were replaced by Taylor, Lissa, and Nicci, who prefer Pilates, low-rider jeans, and the Ivy. But, for all these careful anthropological alterations, Collins overlooked the modern Hollywood wife's latest occupation: novel-writing.

Among the newly minted authors who are married to celebrated filmmakers is Cheryl Howard, wife of Ron, who joins Gigi Levangie Grazer (wife of Brian) and Linda Bruckheimer (wife of Jerry) on the shelves with this month's publication of "In the Face of Jinn," a geopolitical thriller-cum-love story set in Central Asia. Howard—she writes under the pen name Cheryl Howard Crew, the "Crew" having been tacked on in homage to an adventuresome grandmother—met her husband in high school, in Burbank, California, when they were both assigned to Mrs. McBride's English class. Ron invited Cheryl to see "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World," and the romance blossomed; eventually, he signalled his intentions with the gift of a woolly monkey named Sugar. "I said, 'I can't accept her from you, but I'll take care of her,'" Howard recalled the other day, in Greenwich, Connecticut, where she and Ron keep a Cape Cod cottage as a sort of mom-and-pop office building. (Home is a farm in Westchester.) "I felt funny that he'd spent five hundred dollars. That's a very serious gift for someone who's not engaged!"

If Grazer, who writes kicky social comedy (her book "The Starter Wife" comes out in June), is the Jane Austen of the group, and Bruckheimer, who favors steel-magnolia family sagas ("The Southern Belles of Honeysuckle Way"), is the Rebecca Wells, then Howard, who has red hair and a warm, can-do nature, could be called the movement's Graham Greene. The daughter of a waitress and a Louisiana roustabout who eventually settled his family in the San Fernando Valley, she learned to shoot when she was five and flew a taildragger at sixteen. For the past twenty years, the Howards—Cheryl, Ron, their four children, five dogs, seventeen cats, and assorted donkeys and mini-horses—have lived in East Coast exile. "I'm not someone who's a big party-giver," she said, fiddling with a lapis-lazuli earring. "Henry Winkler's wife gives the most glorious parties; Rita Hanks gives great parties; Steve's wife, Kate, gives them. So I have a lot of learning to do in that regard."

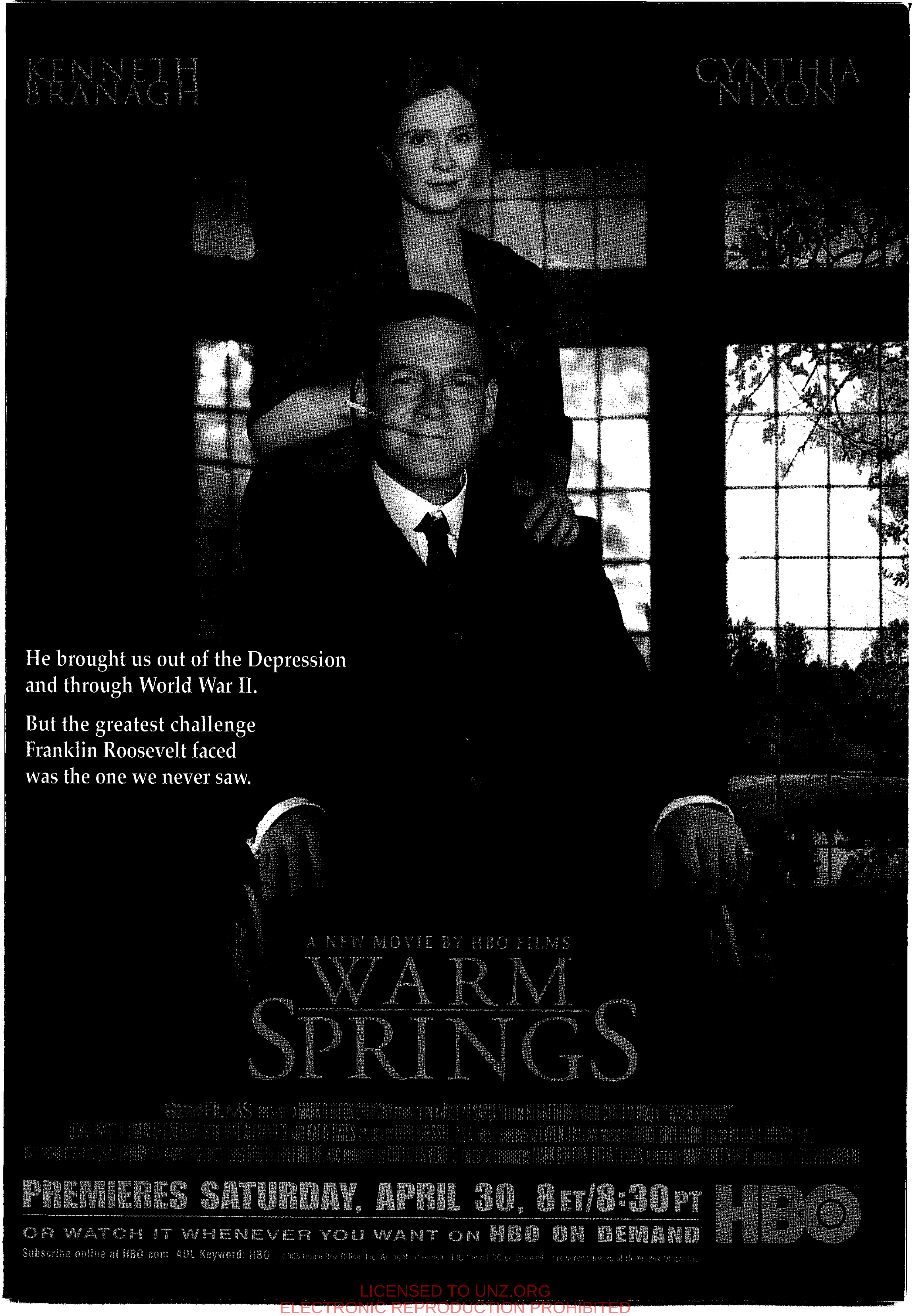
She is similarly modest about her book, which took nine years to write. "I have great difficulty putting sentences together," she said. "Slowly but surely, though, I have progressed as a writer. Ron, thank God, didn't tell me how horrible I really was. He let me sort of evolve."

Howard counts among her literary influences Stephen King, Robert Ludlum, James Clavell, and Nelson DeMille, along with Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. "I love a page-turner," she said. On a good day, she writes for three or four hours, while her assistant holds calls. She uses outlines and index cards to contrive her plots in advance. She admires writers for whom words come naturally—like Gigi Grazer. "Gigi's got a quick wit, and she's very prolific," Howard said. "We'll talk and she always has some deal in the pipeline." (It's not clear whether Grazer, one of whose characters bemoans the glut of novels "about Southern belles and their cancer scares," shares Howard's good will toward the efforts of some of her Hollywood peers.)

Howard began "Jinn" after giving up on several screenplays and a murder mystery. She befriended her children's karate teacher, a Pakistani, and became interested in his native culture. "I said, 'Sensei, you're a Rajput? Sensei, that's so incredible,'" she explained. "The family in my book are Rajputs."

In 1997, she travelled to India and Pakistan, where, with the help of a burka and a retired C.I.A. operative—Robert De Niro introduced her to him—she was able to steal over the border into Afghanistan. "If it hadn't been for Bob, I don't know what I would have done," she said. "I wanted to write about an area that no one knew anything about, that was fresh. My husband said, 'You can't get more obscure than Pakistan.'" There she met women in purdah, arms dealers, opium smokers—into the book they went. Satisfied with the results of her immersion method, Howard is considering visiting the Eastern bloc for her next project. "I researched Bhutan at one point, but there's just not much conflict there," she said. "I'm thinking about Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary. I like picking two or three countries. And Transylvania, because I've got a feeling there's a lot more there than just mythic vampires."

—*Lauren Collins*



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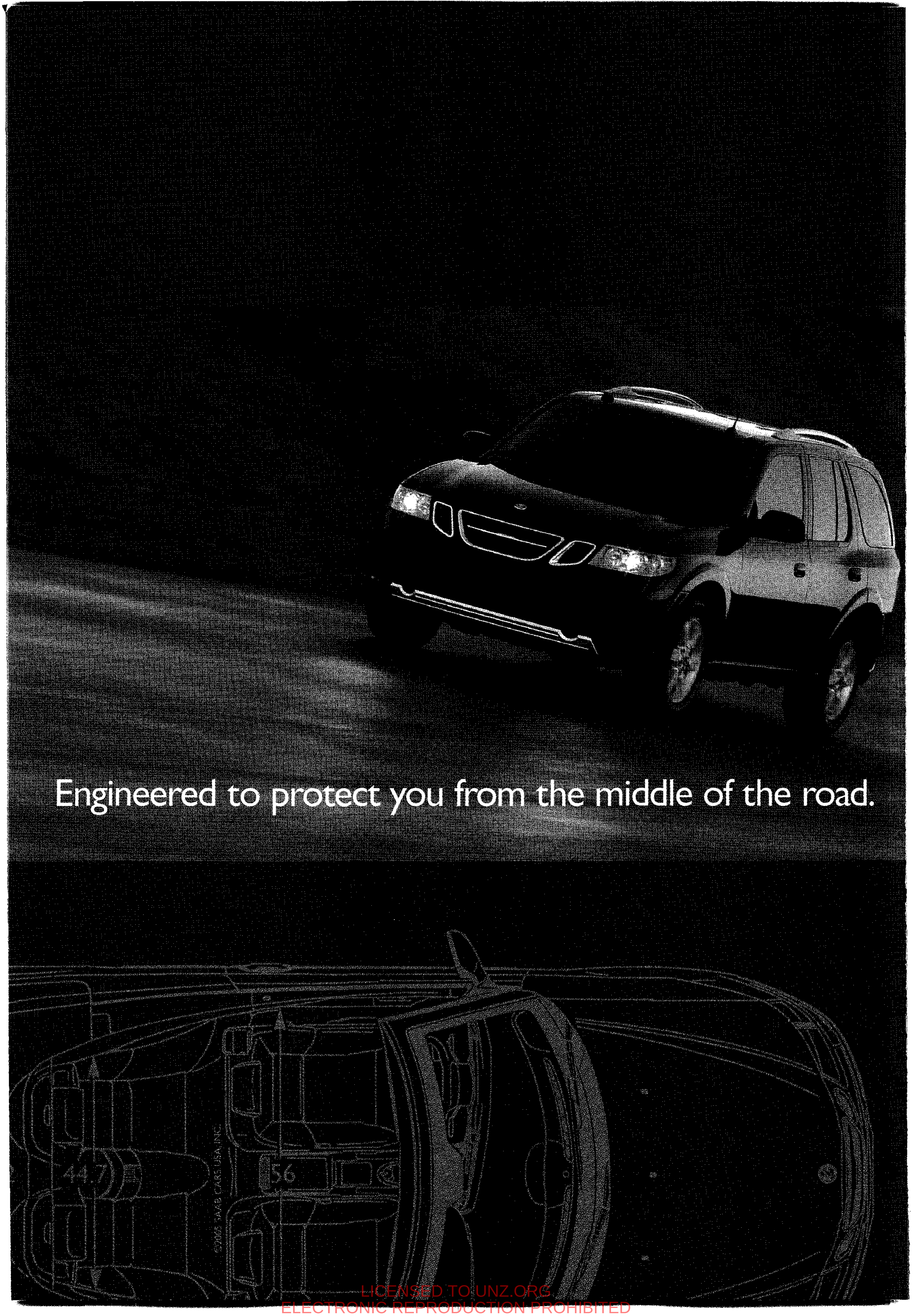
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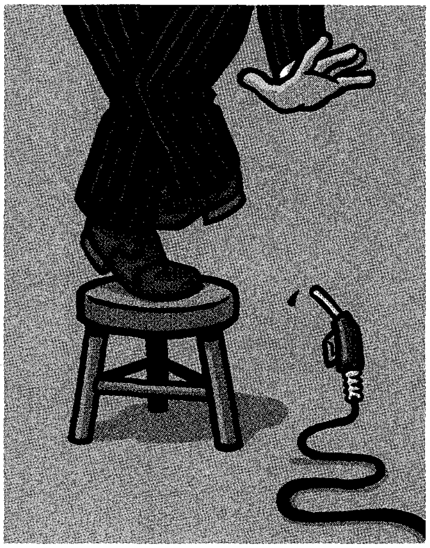
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
OIL CHANGE

It was sometime last spring that the dreaded words "oil shock" first began to appear regularly in commentary on the United States economy. As the price of oil rose past forty dollars a barrel, many economists and Wall Street analysts predicted that higher petroleum prices would slow the economy and perhaps even throw it into recession. They recalled the reverberations of previous oil shocks (in 1973, following the Arab oil embargo; in 1979 and 1980, after the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war; and in 1990, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait) and suggested that we'd soon be feeling them again. Since then, the price of oil has gone well above fifty dollars a barrel, and the oil-price anxiety is as acute as ever. Last week's news that inflation had jumped in March had people talking about stagflation and Gerald Ford. Before we know it, it will be 1974 all over again.

Or not. It may be hard to be blasé when you're paying $2.50 a gallon at the pump, or if you're the chairman of a major airline, but there is surprisingly little evidence that high oil prices have anywhere close to the effect on our economy that we seem to believe they do. They matter, of course, but, of all the reasons to be concerned about America's economic standing, oil, believe it or not, belongs pretty far down on the list.

Why such a lowly rank for the economy's so-called lifeblood? Haven't most postwar recessions been accompanied by rising oil prices? Indeed they have. But correlation is not causation, and all oil spikes are not created equal. The fact that the geopolitical oil crises of the seventies hurt the economy doesn't say much about what high prices will do to us now, in the absence of a crisis.

When you look closely, it is hard to know what effect, exactly, oil prices have on the economy. For instance, higher oil prices are often assumed to be inflationary—that is, they raise prices. But Mark Hooker, a former economist at the Federal Reserve, has shown that since 1980 higher oil prices have had essentially no effect on over-all inflation. Higher oil prices are also said to create uncertainty, which causes consumers and businesses to hold off on major purchases and investments, thereby slowing down the economy. But there's little evidence of this. Robert Barsky and Lutz Kilian, economists at the University of Michigan, have found that in the past three decades higher oil prices have had no consistent effect on whether or not consumers kept buying cars or expensive household items like washing machines. (The oil spike of 1979 led to less car buying. The oil spike of 1980 led to more. Or maybe it all had to do with Lee Iacocca.) Oil shocks have also had no predictable impact on corporations' decisions about whether to invest in equipment or new plants.



Higher prices do function as a kind of tax increase that raises the cost of doing business (with the proceeds effectively going to foreign exporters). But the size of this tax is too small to create a meaningful slowdown on its own. And, while there's some evidence that higher energy costs increase unemployment when oil-dependent industries lay people off, the number of jobs lost is too small to disrupt the economy as a whole.

More recently, steep rises in the price of oil have accompanied healthy economic growth—in 1999-2000 and in the past few years, for example. Declines in oil prices have not necessarily sparked economic booms, either. And recessions haven't always been triggered by high oil prices. The downturns of 1973 and 1990 started even before the oil shocks occurred, which suggests that oil wasn't solely to blame (though it undoubtedly made things worse). In the past thirty-five years, there has not been a single case in which high oil prices have thrown an otherwise propulsive economy into reverse.

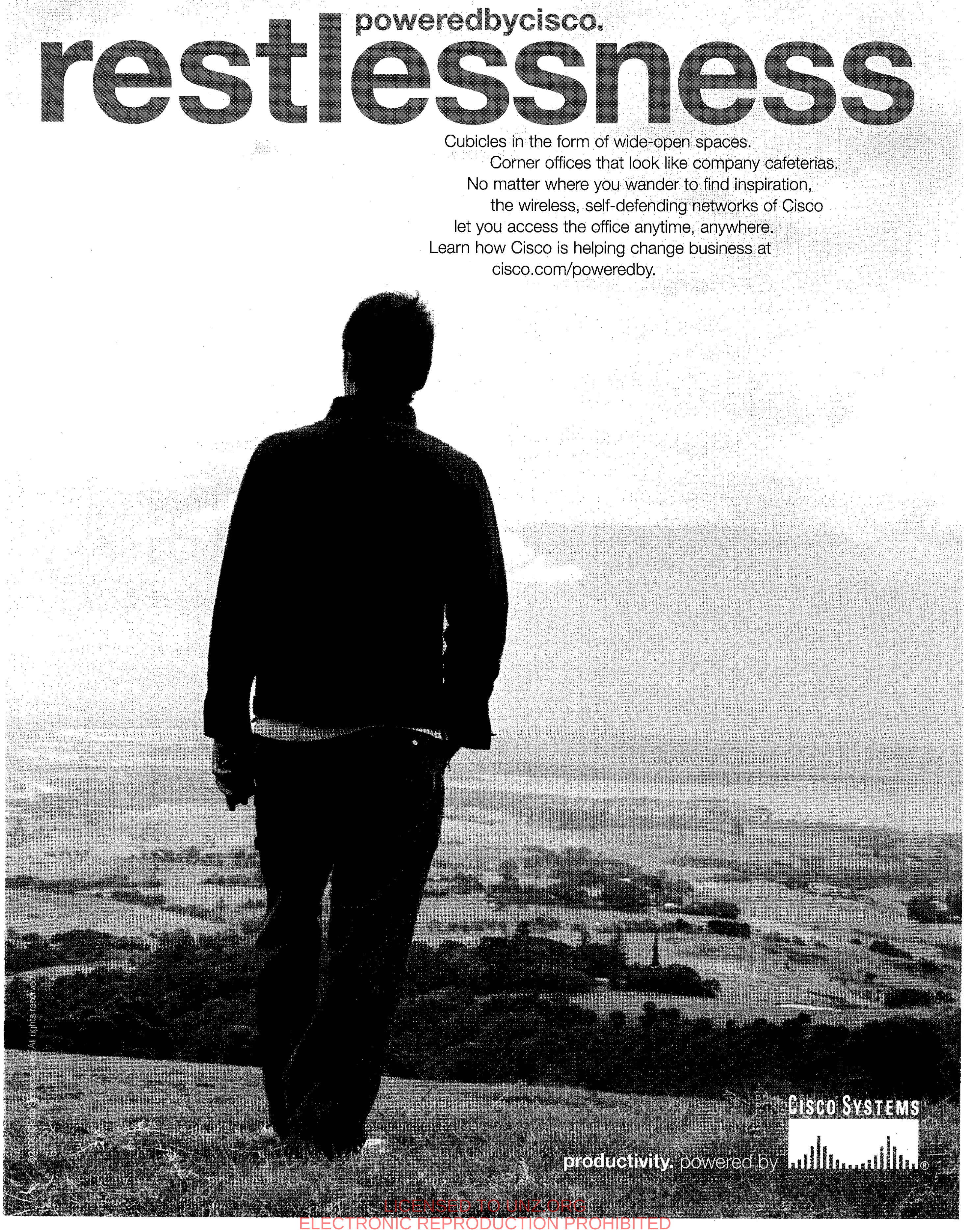
The point is not that oil spikes are irrelevant but that they don't have any kind of predictable or consistent impact. The past isn't much of a guide; the American economy has changed dramatically since the seventies and is far less dependent on oil than it used to be. Roughly speaking, the United States uses about half as much energy per dollar of G.D.P. than it did thirty years ago, and even though American oil production has dwindled, oil imports as a percentage of the economy are still very small (about 1.5 per cent). This is both because of more efficient energy use—though let's not start handing out any medals here—and because of a decline in manufacturing. As for consumers, energy costs still make up less than five per cent of the average household budget, while a barrel of oil costs about sixty per cent of what it did twenty-five years ago.

The Federal Reserve is another factor; it's more sophisticated than it used to be in its management of interest rates and its understanding of oil prices. In the seventies, poor monetary policy helped turn an oil crisis into an economic crisis. There's little chance of that happening today. Also, the current oil spike has been caused, for the most part, not by war or revolution but by a gradual increase in demand, primarily from China and the United States, whereas in the past every oil shock that accompanied a major slowdown was the product of political or military upheaval—a limit on supply.

Historical analogies are hard to resist, especially in a time of difficulty, because they help us identify patterns. That's why Wall Street is rife with rules of thumb. Still, they can also confuse and obfuscate. Sometimes the people who insist that "things are different this time"—for example, during the dot-com boom of the late nineties—are deluding themselves. But sometimes things really are different. It can't be 1974 forever.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



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ANNALS OF MEDICINE

A MODEL PATIENT

How simulators are changing the way doctors are trained.

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

Four students in their third year at Harvard Medical School recently met a patient named Mr. Martin. The students' mentors, two physicians, told them that Martin had come to the emergency room complaining of abdominal pain that had grown steadily worse over several days.

Martin was lying on a stretcher, moaning. A monitor next to the stretcher indicated that his blood pressure was dangerously low—eighty over fifty-four—and his heart was racing at a hundred and eighteen beats per minute. An X-ray mounted on a light box on the wall showed loops of distended bowel, called an ileus. The intestine can swell like this when it is obstructed or inflamed.

"It hurts!" Martin cried as the students reviewed his chart. "They told me you'd give me something for the pain."

"Should we give him something?" one student asked.

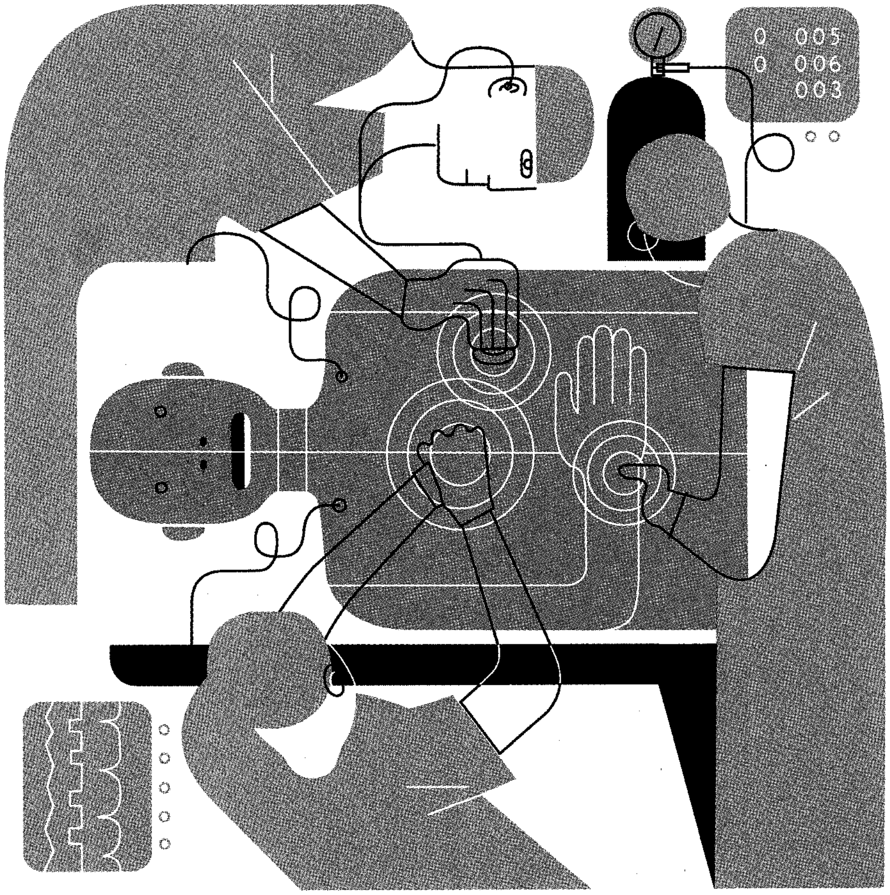
"I guess so," another replied.

The first student emptied a syringe of morphine into an intravenous line attached to Martin's arm. Within a few seconds, Martin stopped moaning. Then the monitor started to beep rapidly. Martin had stopped breathing. The syringe had contained twenty milligrams of morphine, a potentially lethal dose for someone in his condition.

The students began to perform CPR. One passed an endotracheal tube through Martin's vocal cords into his airway. Another began to pump oxygen into the tube.

Dr. Nancy Oriol, the dean of students at Harvard Medical School, showed me a videotape of the students' encounter with Martin. "The students didn't figure it out," she said. The cause of Martin's abdominal pain was acute inflammation of the pancreas. Not only had the students failed to diagnose his illness; they had not taken into account his vital signs. Martin's blood pressure indicated that he was at risk of going into shock and urgently needed fluids. But the students had focussed on his pain, and, distracted by his cries, had given him too much morphine and then neglected to administer naloxone, a morphine antidote, while attempting to resuscitate him. "When the patient is in that much pain, the students' minds go blank," Oriol explained.

Fortunately, Martin is not a real patient but a mannequin, an electronic instructional device known in medicine as a simulator. In many ways, he looks and behaves like a living person: his blue eyes blink, his pupils dilate, his skin is pliant, and his chest expands and contracts as he breathes. If you place a stethoscope over the spot where his heart should be, you can hear authentic beating sounds. His lips, tongue, and windpipe can swell—as a person's would in the event of a severe allergic reaction—and his teeth can be knocked out.



A mannequin's software can create a surprisingly precise illusion of internal anatomy.

RICHARD McGUIRE

Martin is connected by a cable to a computer terminal, and comes with software that enables him to mimic the symptoms of dozens of medical conditions, including septic shock and flash pulmonary edema. (His physiological settings can also be adjusted to correspond to actual cases.) When the students opened Martin's mouth to insert the endotracheal tube, they found realistic reproductions of a pharynx and an epiglottis. When they passed the tube through his vocal cords, it entered what looked like a real trachea. If they had pushed the tube too far, it could have slid into the right lung—a potentially grave error frequently made by novices. The X-ray in the scenario belonged to a man with acute pancreatitis, and Martin's voice, broadcast over a speaker lodged in his head, was that of a Harvard faculty member, speaking into a wireless microphone in the next room and imitating a patient in severe pain. A consortium of anesthesia departments at

Harvard purchased Martin in 1993, for a hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars. A 2005 model, which can be put to sleep with real anesthetic, costs about two hundred thousand dollars. The session that I observed was hardly unusual. "Every group overdosed the patient," Oriol said.

At most schools, medicine is still taught largely as it has been for centuries, with students and young doctors serving as apprentices to veteran physicians. Training begins with textbook descriptions of cases and is followed, in the second or third year of medical school, by instruction at the patient's bedside, an approach known as "See One, Do One, Teach One": the student or intern observes the diagnosis and treatment of a particular disorder and is encouraged to take charge the next time a similar case occurs. The amount of autonomy granted to novices varies. Many senior physicians believe that the sooner an intern takes responsibility for a patient—what some doctors call being in "the hot seat"—the better. During my internship, in the nineteen-seventies, I was often on call alone and rarely asked for assistance; consulting a superior was widely perceived as evidence of incompetence or lack of preparation.

However, the apprenticeship model is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. As insurers reduce reimbursements to hospitals, senior doctors are under pressure to focus on revenue-generating work—treating sick people and conducting procedures—rather than on teaching. Moreover, in order to cut costs, operations and therapies that once took place over several days are now performed in a few hours, or in outpatient settings. As a result, students are spending less time with individual patients and have fewer opportunities to observe a case from diagnosis to resolution. Some life-threatening conditions, such as anaphylactic shock or a ruptured aortic aneurysm, occur infrequently enough that a trainee may become a licensed physician without encountering such disorders or mastering the skills to treat them. Health care may be unique among high-risk fields in that learning takes place largely on human beings.

Dr. David Gaba, an anesthesiologist who directs a simulation center at the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, and who teaches at the Stanford University School of Medicine, created one of the first patient simulators nearly twenty years ago, in an effort to change the way physicians are taught. Gaba estimates that fewer than half of the medical schools in the United States routinely use the devices today. (METI, a Florida company that is one of this country's principal manufacturers of high-tech medical simulators, says that it has sold more than sixty to schools in the past eight years.) "You wouldn't get on an airplane unless the pilot had been trained in a flight simulator and certified to use the new instruments on a jet," Gaba told me. "Why would you place yourself in the hands of a doctor who hadn't proven his competency and been certified on a simulator?"

For the past several years, Harvard Medical School has offered simulation training to medical students. Dr. James Gordon, who directs a simulation program at the school, estimates that about half of the third-year students currently participate in some form of simulation training as part of their instruction in surgery and internal medicine. He invited me to try an exercise with Stan—a 1994 simulator whose name is short for "Standard Patient." I hesitated. It had been nearly three decades since I had been an intern in the emergency room; I was afraid I might embarrass myself.

"Let's play," Gordon said. He retreated behind a curtain. I looked down at Stan. His blue eyes were blinking. I ran my fingers over his chest, which felt soft, like human skin. I took my stethoscope out of my pocket and draped it around my neck, an affectation common among interns.

"Doctor, I don't feel well," Stan said. His voice was raspy, and his speech sounded pressured.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"I'm having trouble breathing, Doctor." Stan began to cough.

I asked whether he had had trouble breathing before. He replied that a doctor had told him that he had asthma. I asked what medications he took, and he said that he didn't know.

I could feel my heart begin to race. My palms grew moist. "Do you use an inhaler?"

"Yes, sometimes, Doctor," Stan said.

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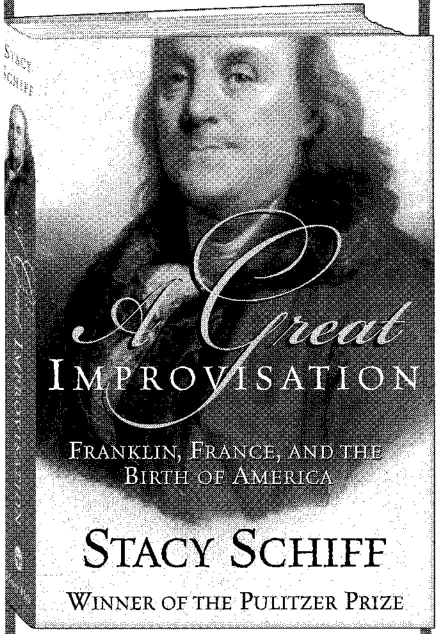
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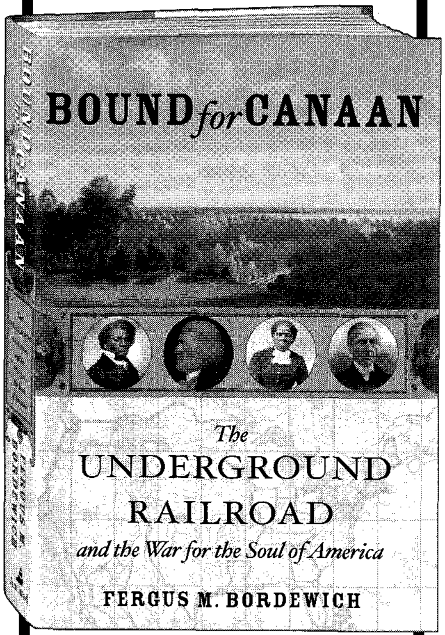
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"I'm having more trouble breathing."

I asked whether he had any allergies. He said no. The beep of the monitor displaying his vital signs seemed to grow louder and more rapid. Stan's pulse had increased to a hundred and ten beats per minute, and his oxygen level was dropping.

"I'm going to examine you, Stan," I said. I placed my stethoscope on his chest and heard harsh wheezes typical of asthma.

"It's getting harder to breathe," Stan said.

"Administer an albuterol inhaler, please," I said. Dr. Gordon, sitting at a computer behind the curtain, manipulated Stan's vital signs to indicate that he had received the drug. But the medicine seemed to have little effect. Stan's pulse continued to accelerate, and his oxygen level to fall.

"Doctor . . . Doctor . . . I can hardly breathe," he gasped.

For a moment, I almost panicked. I placed my stethoscope on Stan's chest again and listened intently. The breath sounds were much fainter over the right lung.

"Do you want a chest X-ray, Doctor?" a voice said from behind the curtain. It had the coaxing tone of an E.R. nurse speaking to an intern.

"Yes," I said.

On a large plasma screen not far from the stretcher, a chest X-ray appeared. Around the right lung, I could see a thick band of black.

"Pneumothorax," I said aloud. Stan had ruptured his lung. This can happen to people with asthma and other chronic lung diseases: a weakened segment of tissue gives way, and air moves into the space between the lung and the chest wall. The air appears black in an X-ray. A pneumothorax can press against the heart and blood vessels and cause the lung to collapse entirely. Unless a tube is inserted into the chest to evacuate the air, the patient is likely to die.

Gordon was smiling when he stepped from behind the curtain. But I was sweating. When I was an intern, an elderly lady with rheumatoid arthritis had been brought to the emergency room from a nursing home because she was having trouble breathing. She was terribly deformed by her disease, and her lung tissue had begun to deteriorate. I examined her and detected faint breath sounds on the right side of her chest. An X-ray showed a pneumothorax, so I made an incision in her chest and inserted a tube to release the trapped air and reëxpand her lung. I thought that I had made a brilliant diagnosis, and was proud of my performance in front of the nurses. I left the woman and attended to other patients. Several minutes later, I was summoned to her bedside. She was no longer breathing and had gone into shock. I was unable to resuscitate her. When I looked again at her chest X-ray, I saw that there had been a second pneumothorax, over her left lung. I had missed it, and my error had caused her death.

The attending physician in the emergency room tried to comfort me, pointing out that the woman had had no family, that she had been severely debilitated by her lung disease, and that she might not have recovered even if I had inserted a second chest tube. But for days afterward I felt sick.

As a medical student, I had read about pneumothorax, but I had never encountered an actual case. After the incident, the diagnosis immediately occurred to me whenever someone entered the emergency room with shortness of breath. I could not look at a chest X-ray without lingering over the area between each lung and the chest wall. Gordon was unaware of my experience when he chose to simulate a pneumothorax. It was the reason I had been able to detect Stan's problem so quickly. I had learned well, but at an incalculable cost.

Shortly after my session with Stan, I spoke to David Gaba, at Stanford, and told him what had happened. Practicing medicine on a mannequin is "more profound for seasoned doctors than for novices, because they fill in the gaps of their experiences in the real world," he said. "For the novices, they are still filling in their imagination."

Gaba, who is fifty years old, has a degree in engineering. In the mid-eighties, near the beginning of his career as an anesthesiologist at Stanford, he read "Normal Accidents," by Charles Perrow, which contains an analysis of the catastrophe at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant. He was struck by the similarities between the power plant and the operating room; in both places, accidents often occurred because staff members failed to communicate with one another when equipment malfunctioned and lives were in danger. He wondered how anesthesiologists could be taught to be more effective during a medical crisis. The academic studies of decision-making in medicine were not particularly helpful; most were based on doctors' responses to theoretical scenarios, rather than on observations of their actual behavior during emergencies. "Classic literature in medical decision-making would have you believe that everyone generates a hypothesis and then follows a pathway with decision points," Gaba said. "But no one really works that way." He considered asking teams of anesthesiologists and surgeons to let him watch them perform procedures on dogs, but abandoned the idea when it proved both expensive and ethically problematic.

In 1986, he decided to build a dummy patient. With the help of Abe DeAnda, Jr., a student who was also a trained engineer, Gaba fashioned a crude simulator from a plastic head-and-neck mannequin used to teach intubation. He extended the mannequin's trachea with a tube and made a lung out of a breathing bag. Then he ran a cable from a computer to a clinical waveform generator, a device that translates heart rhythm and blood pressure into electrical impulses, and which biomedical engineers use to test the accuracy of hospital equipment. On the computer's monitor, undulating lines appeared, representing cardiac and blood-pressure data.

Though the mannequin was useful for practicing how to treat various cardiac arrhythmias and respiratory conditions, it was essentially inert, requiring users to imagine physiological events corresponding to changes in the vital signs displayed on the monitor. Over the next several years, Gaba and his student developed a software program to go with their dummy, painstakingly translating mathematical models of physiological processes—pressure levels in major arteries and shifts in blood volume—into computer code. In 1992, Gaba licensed the software to CAE-Link, a company that made aviation simulators for military pilots. Two years later, CAE-Link began selling an electronic medical mannequin—an early version of Stan.

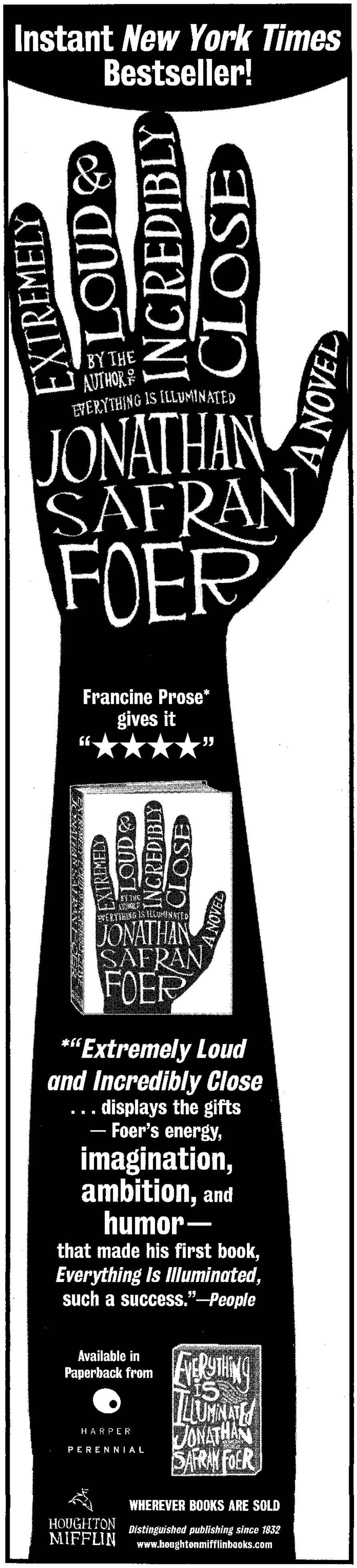
Gaba believed that patient simulators could help doctors make faster diagnoses and master simple procedures, but he knew that they were unlikely to help improve communication in the O.R. He had watched a "Nova" program called "Why Planes Crash," which described a method known as "crew resource management," or C.R.M., which is used by commercial airlines and the military in pilot training. C.R.M. was developed by NASA in the late nineteen-seventies, on the theory that failure to avoid a crash could often be traced to poor communication in the cockpit. Gaba decided to adapt the method for anesthesiologists working in the O.R., where they must monitor a stream of data about a patient's vital organs and relay critical information to the surgeon and the nursing team. In 1989, working in part from a manual designed for the cockpit, Gaba designed a daylong course that he called ACRM, for Anesthesia Crisis Resource Management, and began training residents.

Gaba and I watched a videotape of an ACRM simulation conducted at the V.A. hospital affiliated with Stanford. The exercise took place in a room resembling an O.R., and involved a second-year anesthesiology resident, in the hot seat, and, performing parts that Gaba had scripted for them, two nurses and an experienced anesthesiologist. A Stan-like mannequin served as the patient, a young woman undergoing laparoscopic surgery—a minimally invasive technique in which slender instruments are inserted through small incisions in the abdomen—for a diseased appendix. A few minutes into the operation, after carbon dioxide had been pumped into the woman's abdomen to make room for the surgical instruments, her heart rhythm became abnormal and her blood turned acidic. As the anesthesiology resident tried to figure out why the patient was deteriorating, the surgeon, played by the senior anesthesiologist, spoke to him in a peremptory tone.

The resident said, "I'm having a little trouble with the ventilator—"

"I don't know what your problem is," the surgeon interrupted, "but I need a better view."

"I need to blow off more CO_2," the resident retorted. "I'm getting a lot of PVCs right now." The monitor showed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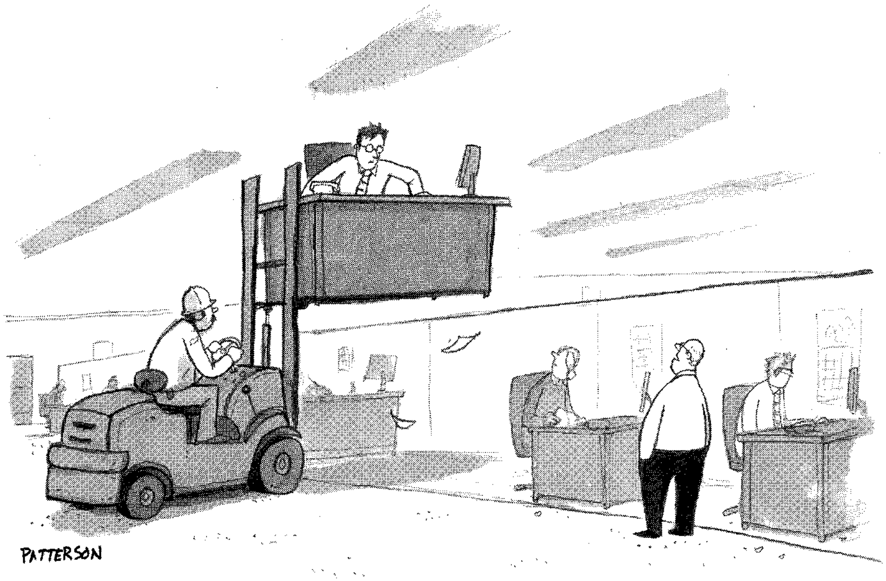


"Don't worry, Phil, we're just moving you down to four."

• •

premature ventricular contractions, abnormal heartbeats that often precede cardiac arrest.

"Don't worry," the surgeon said.

The resident glanced nervously at the monitor. "If you want to proceed with the operation, then you have to open," he said to the surgeon. Cutting open the patient's abdomen would presumably release the carbon dioxide, help restore her blood's acid balance, and allow her heart to beat normally.

"No," the surgeon said.

"Please call my anesthesia colleague in right now and turn on the lights right now," the resident said in a tense voice. "Convert to an open procedure if you want to proceed with this case. I'm hand-ventilating right now—it's the only way I can get the CO_2 off."

"Then what's the matter with your ventilator?" the surgeon asked.

The resident seemed confused for a moment. Then he glared at the surgeon. "Right now the patient is very unstable," he said. "I suggest you pack the wound."

"What do you mean? What's going on?" the surgeon replied. "I don't understand what your problem is."

Flustered by the surgeon's hostile behavior, the resident only belatedly arrived at a diagnosis: malignant hyperthermia, a severe and relatively rare reaction to certain anesthetic drugs that, if not treated immediately, can cause death.

Gaba has evaluated scores of anesthesiologists and O.R. teams in ACRM scenarios. About a third of the anesthesiologists and about a quarter of the O.R. teams failed to ask for help, did not accept help when it was offered, or did not work together effectively in a crisis. Frequently, there were communication problems of the sort I observed on the videotape—moments when, as Gaba put it, participants were "speaking into thin air, not clearly addressing a co-worker, or being imprecise about what they wanted done."

Gaba recently persuaded Stanford to make simulation training—both scripted scenarios and mannequin practice—a requirement for medical students, something that many schools, citing financial considerations, have resisted. "In aviation, simulation is a cost of doing business," Gaba said. "In medicine, you get your training while you are producing revenue, or on your own time."

In 2000, Dr. Richard Satava, who was then a surgeon at Yale Medical School, conducted a study with several colleagues to determine whether doctors who had practiced on surgical simulators performed better in the O.R. than doctors who had learned their skills under the apprenticeship system. Satava had been an Army combat surgeon for twenty-three years, and had worked at DARPA, the Defense Department's research-and-development arm. In 1987, with the help of Jaron Lanier, a pioneer of virtual-reality technology, he built one of the first surgical simulators: a computer terminal with video-game-style graphics, on which doctors could practice a number of laparoscopic procedures.

At Yale, Satava and his colleagues enlisted sixteen surgical residents to test the efficacy of a similar simulator, which he had persuaded the school to purchase. First, the researchers assessed the residents' psychomotor skills, including hand-eye coördination and ability to transpose mirror images. Then they randomly assigned the residents to either simulation training or conventional training in laparoscopic gallbladder removal. The residents who worked with the simulator practiced until they met the standard of competency set by specialists who routinely execute the procedure. All sixteen residents then performed the surgery on actual patients under the supervision of attending surgeons who did not know which kind of training the residents had received. The operations were videotaped, and reviewed independently by two senior investigators who also did not know how the residents had learned the procedure.

The residents had displayed similar psychomotor skills, but the two groups performed very differently in the O.R. Those who had trained on the simulator completed the operation, on average, twenty-nine per cent faster than those who had not. Moreover, the residents who had received standard surgical training were nine times more likely to hesitate during the operation, five times more likely to injure the gallbladder or burn surrounding tissues, and six times more likely to make other errors. Additional research has shown that simulator training significantly enhances performance of hernia repairs, nasal sinus procedures, and bronchoscopic examinations of the lungs.

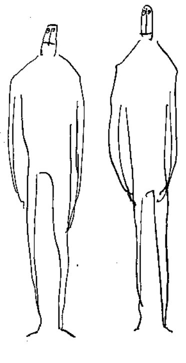
Satava is now at the University of Washington, in Seattle, where he directs the Institute for Surgical Intervention and Simulation. Eventually, he says, simulators will be able to provide comprehensive medical training of the sort that a single doctor can't provide. "Every resident will do fifty Whipples"—a surgery for pancreatic cancer—"fifty lung resections, two hundred gallbladders, and two hundred colons, all virtually."

Before this can happen, however, medical mannequins need to become even more sophisticated than Stan. In 1998, a group of physicians at Massachusetts General Hospital, working with engineers from Mitsubishi, the Japanese electronics company, created a new type of simulator called VIST, for Vascular Intervention System Training. A rectangular box five feet long and made of molded plastic, VIST behaves as if it were composed of blood and tissue. Its software creates an illusion of internal anatomy so precise that a catheter threaded through a portal in the box and into a coronary artery will encounter torque and resistance just where it would in a human being and enables doctors to practice repairs of arteries in the heart, brain, kidneys, and abdomen. A computer tracks the physicians' movements and displays X-ray images of relevant vessels and surrounding body parts.

Dr. Steven Dawson, the director of simulation at CIMIT, a consortium that includes two Harvard hospitals and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is one of the physicians who developed VIST. When I visited his laboratory in Cambridge, in February, he had just returned from the White House, where he had given a presentation on medical simulation to an audience that included members of the Department of Defense, the Centers for Disease Control, and the C.I.A. Dawson says that he is often asked whether it is possible to "practice an operation on a simulator before performing it on my mother." Last May, at a medical conference in a hospital in Paris, French doctors showed how this can be done. Before the conference, a CAT scan was performed on an elderly woman who was to undergo coronary catheterization. The information on the scan was digitized and loaded into VIST's computer, where it appeared as a detailed image of the woman's cardiac anatomy. Two cardiologists, who were scheduled to perform the catheterization, were invited to practice the procedure on VIST. The doctors had trouble manipulating the catheter through some coronary vessels, and they complained that the simulator was not sufficiently realistic. After completing the practice session, the cardiologists went next door to the operating room and performed the catheterization on the patient while colleagues watched. "When they did Grandma, they had problems specifically where the physics-based simulator had presented them during the practice," Dawson said. "It just blew the audience away."

VIST provides an authentic simulation of the human vascular system. Dawson's group is now attempting to create a complete synthetic human, which will incorporate the respiratory and musculoskeletal systems as well. Dawson showed me the design labs next to his office, where the project is under way. On a wall in the main room was a marker board covered with complex mathematical equations. In an adjoining room, several partial skeletons lay on the floor, next to a pile of reproductions of human bones. On a table was a prototype for a shoulder: two metal rods connected to a circular metal cap. Dawson rotated the contraption through a series of arcs, imitating a pitcher in a windup. Elsewhere in the lab, synthetic skin was being made from a mixture of polyurethane and silicone.

Dawson invited me to try suturing a wound on CELTS, a Computer-Enhanced Laparoscopic Training System, which CIMIT completed in 2002. CELTS resembled a large metal lunchbox with a domed lid, in which there were two round holes for inserting surgical instruments. Projected on a video monitor nearby was an image of the box's contents: a mound of synthetic tissue and, planted in the top layer, at the edge of a large gash, a curved needle and suture thread. In each hand, I gripped a laparoscopic instrument—a metal rod ending in a set of serrated jaws. Sewing tissue is a simple procedure, but I had never tried to do it laparoscopically. I slipped the instruments into the box, and the serrated jaws appeared on the monitor, where I could follow their movements, just as a laparoscopist does in the O.R. The needle was deep in the dermis, and it took me several seconds to capture it with the jaws. Then I had to learn how to hold the instrument at an angle that would allow me to move the needle cleanly through the tissue. This required a great deal of force; at first, I lost the needle in the thick skin. Finally, after much struggle, I saw the tip emerge from the wound.



All the while, the simulator was recording my movements and analyzing each error: the needle's arc of entry was insufficiently acute; the smoothness of its movement through the synthetic tissue was poor; and, of course, I had briefly lost the needle in the skin. I knew that when I finished the procedure a graph would appear on the monitor, comparing my performance with that of an expert. I decided to stop before CELTS gave me a failing grade.

The machine has yet to be adopted by a hospital or a medical school. Dawson told me that many surgeons are wary of the device, arguing that its value remains unproved. (CIMIT has also developed Virgil, a mannequin that spurts fake blood and is now being used by military physicians to simulate battlefield injuries.) "Have there been randomized prospective controlled trials to see if a parachute works?" Dawson asked. "Some things just make sense. But medicine is very conservative and very traditional."

Last August, the F.D.A. approved the use of a stent in the repair of carotid arteries. In its ruling, the agency stipulated that doctors wishing to perform the procedure must follow training guidelines set by the stent's manufacturers. These call for physicians to practice on a simulator until they obtain a level of proficiency comparable to that of an expert. The ruling was the first by the agency to endorse simulation training.

The stent procedure is extremely difficult to perform. The two carotid arteries, which are situated on either side of the neck, supply blood to the brain, and when one vessel becomes obstructed because of atherosclerosis the risk of stroke is extremely high. Treatment has typically involved an operation in which an incision is made directly in the diseased artery, and forceps are used to remove plaque deposits. Complications from the surgery include stroke and heart attack. Recent studies have shown that catheter-based approaches, in which a stent is inserted into the artery, are equally effective and have half the rate of complications.

In January, I watched Dr. Lawrence Garcia, an interventional cardiologist at

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, in Boston, perform the stent procedure on a seventy-eight-year-old man with diabetes and atherosclerosis. Although the patient had not experienced any neurological symptoms, his carotid arteries were obstructed, the one on his left side at ninety-nine per cent.

It took Garcia a little more than half an hour to repair the left artery. He threaded a metal stent through a catheter placed in the femoral artery in the patient's groin, up through the iliac artery and the aorta, and implanted it in the obstructed vessel. When he finished the operation, the blockage had been reduced by nearly ninety per cent, and circulation to the left side of the man's brain had been restored. He was discharged within twenty-four hours.

Garcia, who estimates that he has performed the procedure more than three hundred times, says that several kinds of physicians are competing to do it. In one group are doctors, typically cardiologists, who have been trained to use catheters to treat vascular disease, including carotid-artery obstructions. (Garcia belongs in this category.) In the second group are cardiologists who want to extend their range of expertise beyond the heart but lack sufficient training. Finally, there are surgeons who have little or no catheter experience but who realize that their professional survival may depend on their ability to place a stent rather than cut into a vessel. "As things have shifted toward more catheter-based procedures, their income is going to be threatened," Garcia said. Nevertheless, he added, "it is not a simple transition from surgery to catheter." He worries that simulation training can do only so much to help prepare physicians for the idiosyncrasies of human vascular anatomy, and believes that inexperienced doctors should, in addition, perform the procedure under the supervision of experts—a form of apprenticeship.

According to Dr. Daniel Jones, the chief of minimally invasive surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess, his hospital is the only one in the country to require surgical residents to demonstrate proficiency in simulated procedures in order to advance to the next year. The policy was instituted last year, after a campaign by Jones, who recently established a skills lab at the hospital which includes ten laparoscopic video trainers, a urological simulator, a gastrointestinal simulator, and two mannequins like Stan—one for use in anesthesia procedures, the other for trauma cases. When I visited Jones at his lab, he told me that he would like to extend simulation testing to medical students applying to the program. Though surgical skills can improve with practice, he said, medical schools shouldn't encourage students with poor hand-eye coördination or other severe limits in psychomotor ability. "If you can identify people who don't have it on the day of the interview, you will be doing them a big service—and a big service for others," he said. I thought of my experience with CELTS and agreed that some doctors may be better with their heads than with their hands.

Jones recently won approval from the chairman of his department to begin using simulators to assess the performance of senior faculty. Before the surgeons are evaluated, they are invited into the skills lab to practice. The goal is for everybody to pass, Jones said. But those who are unable to meet the department's standards will be asked to leave.

While we were talking, one of the hospital's senior surgeons appeared. He was scheduled to perform a difficult operation to remove an adrenal-gland tumor and wanted to practice his laparoscopic skills. The surgeon was clearly nervous about testing himself on the simulator in my presence, and asked that I not discuss his performance with his colleagues. About an hour later, however, he had successfully completed the tasks on the simulator, well within the recommended time period, and said that I was free to mention his performance to others.

"Every gray-haired doctor imagines being put in the hot seat," Nancy Oriol told me. She mentioned a prominent physician at Harvard, who, after observing a simulation of a medical crisis, told her, "If that were me, I'd be in the corner screaming." So far, Oriol has been unable to persuade the school to make simulation training a major requirement for students or faculty. "It is scary," she said. "And it's expensive. You need quality technicians. It's new, and there aren't that many people who know how to teach simulation. But what better way to learn medicine?" ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM MADE CLEAR

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

> . . . Combined with a partial improvement in the CPI (the BLS implementing its vastly superior chained-CPI, which would eliminate 30-40 basis points of the bias), these reforms will easily deal with the long-run solvency issues.
>
> —*The Republican economist Michael Boskin, writing in the Wall Street Journal.*

Q: Is President Bush's proposal to reform Social Security a good thing for older people?

A: Utterly. Deferred benefit indexation, when viewed through an actuarial matrix subliminator, shows a benefit-to-deficit ratio of .003, which is entirely within normal parameters.

Q: What about younger folks?

A: Assetized over a B.L.S.-modified thermo-demographic time-horizon, no problemo.

Q: Then why is the President's proposal encountering such resistance?

A: The Democrats are just trying to make it sound more complicated than it is.

Q: Will it be necessary to raise the retirement age?

A: Looking at the out-year projections on a nonlinear, bi-sequential theta curve, no. Of course, you won't hear the Democrats making that argument.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Q: What about these private accounts? Will people really have access to their own money?

A: There are two—well, three . . . no, four—ways of looking at it. Five, actually. But let's focus on the first, fourth, and fifth. As recently as 1977, a B.L.T.—

Q: B.L.S., you mean? Bureau of Labor Statistics?

A: No, bacon, lettuce, and tomato. . . . Look, you have to view it through a monetarized Feldman prism. The old matrices are, let's face it, out the window. If you go back to the nineteen-thirties, or even to the reign of Vercingetorix, the only way of proximizing was to extrapolate an entire ex-ante carve-out into an ex-post add-on. Hardly an elegant solution.

Q: The President's opponents say that the private accounts are going to cost something like two trillion dollars. Is that true?

A: It depends on how you view "two trillion dollars." If you look at it as a concept, it's just a number on paper. But if you look at two trillion as a stack of one-dollar bills that would reach to Pluto and back, sure, it's a lot of money. So is three trillion. So is four trillion. So is a googol-zillion katrillion umptillion. And why stop there? It's a spurious argument on its face. I spit on it.

Q: The President's plan is predicated on the stock market's returning 6.5 per cent. Isn't that, historically speaking, unrealistic?

A: Only if you're still calculating with a slide rule. The out-year S. & P. projectivization is acceptably maximizable to within a six-to-eight-per-cent range, as long as you keep changing the oil and occasionally sacrifice a few peacocks and white bullocks to the god Amen-Ra. There's simply no reason not to assume that the U.S. economy will enjoy unprecedented growth until the year 2525. But, for political reasons, the Democrats insist that we're in for plagues of frogs and boils and an S. & P. index of ten times earnings. I mean, come on. You wonder how they can keep a straight face while making these pronouncements.

Q: Is Social Security reform affected by the fact that the national debt is skyrocketing, or that the dollar is plunging, or that the President's Medicare drug-entitlement program will be nearly twice as costly as he said?

A: As a percentage of G.D.P., the deficit is actually lower than it was in 1066 A.D. As for the dollar, it'll still buy you a cheeseburger. And if the Bank of Korea doesn't want to go on subsidizing our life style, to hell with them. Lay a two-hundred-per-cent tariff on Samsung products, pull our troops out, and let them deal with that nut-case hair ball across the border. Medicare-wise, O.K., it's going to cost $720 billion instead of $400 billion. So someone screwed up. Do you ever screw up? What are you, perfect? I'm telling you, Social Security reform is a slam dunk. Why is everyone suddenly so, like, obtuse? ♦

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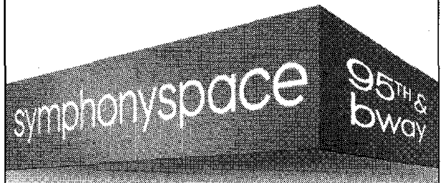

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ROMAN RENOVATION

Can Richard Meier undo what Augustus and Mussolini wrought?

BY JOHN SEABROOK

Recent events at St. Peter's Square, in Rome, have demonstrated, among other things, the virtues of a piazza. Three million people entered Rome in the course of about five days, and almost all of them came to the piazza outside the basilica. Bernini, the piazza's main architect, conceived the square (which is actually oval) in the seventeenth century as a site of pilgrimage, although he might not have imagined what could happen when Christian zeal is combined with mass tourism. Nevertheless, apart from a few minor incidents, everyone in the square behaved. For the people waiting outside it, in a line to view Pope John Paul II's body which stretched for more than three miles, the arms of Bernini's great flanking colonnades were ahead, like a big stone hug ready to enfold pilgrims and sightseers alike at the end of their ordeal.

The line snaked across the Vittorio Emanuele II bridge, upriver along the eastern bank of the Tiber, and almost as far as another square, Piazza Augusto Imperatore. If St. Peter's Square is a model for all the good things a piazza can be, Piazza Augusto is an example of all the things that can go wrong. Instead of the generously open space of St. Peter's, there's a large pile of earth and rock blocking the middle of this piazza, which houses the tomb of Augustus, Rome's first emperor. Its ancient stones are covered with a ragged crown of cypress trees.

The base of this uncharacteristically neglected-looking ruin has been excavated down to Year Zero, the street level two millennia ago, which was eighteen feet lower than the urban surface today; the area around the base now serves mainly as a toilet for dogs. Above this pit, on two sides of the piazza are Fascist-style façades of buildings constructed under Mussolini. On a third side are two Baroque churches, attached to another thirties building, and on the fourth side is the monumental sculptural frieze known as the Ara Pacis, or Altar of Peace, an early masterpiece of Roman art which was dedicated by Augustus in 9 B.C. If you line it up right, you can fit two thousand years of architectural history and three great eras of Roman builders (the emperors, the Popes, and the Fascists) in a single snapshot.

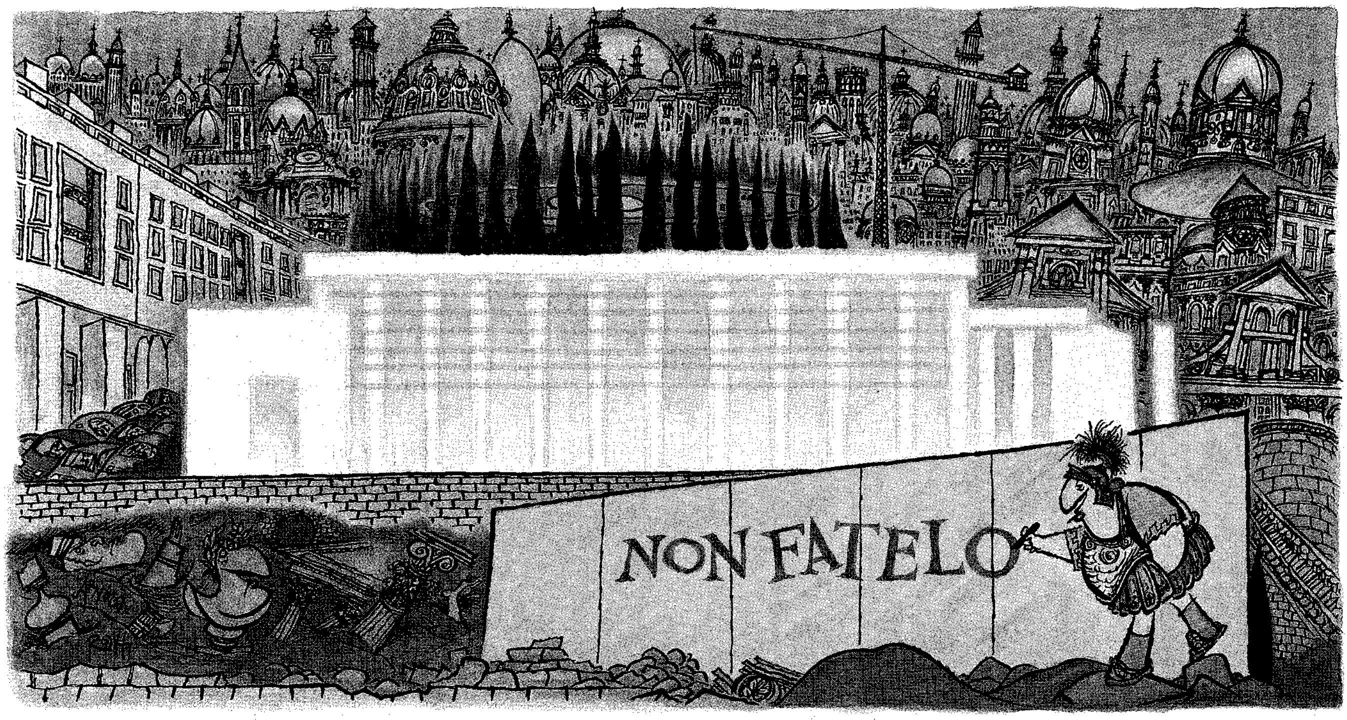
However, while the individual structures are interesting, they don't work together. There's something wrong with the over-all scale of the square. A piazza can be intimate, like Piazza Mattei, in the Ghetto, which is just big enough to hold its delightful turtle fountain, or it can be expansive, like Piazza Venezia, where Mussolini staged his big rallies. But whether it serves as the site of an impromptu soccer game, a political demonstration, or a pilgrimage, a piazza must always function as a stage for acting out scenes from the drama of everyday life. On this level, Piazza Augusto fails completely. It is a *dente cariato*, a rotten tooth—an abscess in Rome's idea of its own perfection.

The story of Piazza Augusto Imperatore is a tale of how the city that invented civic architecture stopped creating it, except at its edges, where ugly post-war housing developments have spoiled the once famous *campagna romana*. It begins more than two thousand years ago, in the early days of the Roman Empire, with the construction of the mausoleum of Augustus, and it runs through Mussolini and his massive new architectural program for Rome with the piazza at its heart. Now it involves contemporary Roman politics, the celebrated American architect Richard Meier, and a fervid argument over the place of modern buildings in Rome.

In 1993, Rome elected as its mayor Francesco Rutelli, a thirty-nine-year-old star of the left, and, like many previous Roman leaders, he came to power with an itch to build. Rutelli's height, piercing green eyes, and American-style communication skills earned him the nickname Clintonino, or Little Clinton. He had a number of plans to rejuvenate the Eternal City. "I think cities are like languages," Rutelli told me. "If a language doesn't change, grow, and evolve, it dies. It is the same with cities—a city must be transformed from time to time."

One obvious means of effecting that transformation is to commission a dramatic new building. All the other major European cities have done this, from Daniel Libeskind's star-shaped Jewish Museum, in Berlin, to Richard Rogers's Millennium Dome, in London, and Richard Meier's Museum of Contemporary Art, in Barcelona. Even if people detest the building (the Dome, for example, was vilified by many Londoners), they talk about it, and the debate gives the city a youthful energy that the Colosseum and the Pantheon can't provide all by themselves.

Shortly after Rutelli was elected, he was invited by the mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall, to see Richard Meier's museum there, and he was enchanted by it. The following year, he met Meier, in Davos, Switzerland, at the World Economic Summit; both were participating in a seminar on the future of cities. Afterward, they spoke about the possibility of Meier's designing a new museum to house the Ara Pacis, on the west side of Piazza Augusto. Rutelli wanted the building ready for the Year 2000 celebrations, a major event in Rome, and he proposed that it would be partially funded by corporate sponsors, in this case a consortium of three banks that had supported other cultural activities in Rome. A time-consuming competition could be avoided; in fact, there would be no public review at all. As Rutelli put it, "It was perhaps a risk, but we wanted to avoid dragging the process out with too long a debate."



For many Romans, the reaction to Meier's design for a museum on the Piazza Augusto was simply "Non fatelo"—don't build it.

ARNOLD ROTH

Richard Meier was thrilled with Rutelli's offer. "It's every architect's dream to build in the center of Rome, partly because it hasn't been done for so long," he told me. Naturally, Meier also liked Rutelli's scheme for avoiding a competition. "It was an unusual situation," he said. "Normally, in projects of this kind, you go through a long jury process to select an architect. This was direct—and to me it seems like the best way."

Born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1934, Meier studied architecture at Cornell and made his name by designing residences, most notably the 1967 Smith House, in Darien, Connecticut, on Long Island Sound. Early in his career, Meier and four other architects, calling themselves the New York Five, proclaimed their allegiance to the ideas of Le Corbusier and the Northern European tradition of modernism. According to Le Corbusier, a building should take no account of its setting and context—the architect should be concerned only with the formal properties of the structure itself. Meier favored an industrial aesthetic that was rigorously minimalist, rejecting all ornamental flourishes except for those which can be achieved with white paint, glass, and light. Some of Meier's contemporaries, notably Michael Graves, later moved away from these tenets, but Meier has remained steadfastly Corbusian. Only the scale has changed, as he has progressed from houses to museums and government buildings. Despite the modernity of Meier's style, his buildings are deeply conservative.

In 1973, Meier spent a year at the American Academy in Rome, which is situated at the top of the Janiculum Hill, the highest point in central Rome. "Rome taught me how to treat large interior spaces in an intimate way," he said. "The way the light comes in, the way you experience the space, move through the space—that sense of promenade. You don't try to duplicate that, but you hope you learn from it. It's what every architect comes to Rome for, to learn that." One of Meier's favorite buildings in Rome is Sant' Ivo alla Sapienza, Borromini's church off Corso del Rinascimento, which is designed like a six-pointed star. "You can go to Sant' Ivo when there are two people, and you can go there when there are a hundred people, and it still feels intimate."

Augustus was a sober, culturally conservative Roman; it's typical that one of his first great buildings was his tomb. At the time Augustus built his mausoleum, it was among the largest structures in early imperial Rome—an enormous round base of brick clad in gleaming white marble, on top of which sat a towering mound of earth that was planted with evergreens and cypresses, in the style of the Etruscan tombs. Work on it began soon after Augustus defeated Anthony and Cleopatra in the battle of Actium, in 31 B.C. As it turned out, Augustus didn't need his tomb for forty-two more years, and during that time he created many other monuments: temples, aqueducts, colonnades, theatres, roads, and bridges. These were not only buildings for the religious and political élite but also great architecture for the masses.

The Ara Pacis was commissioned in 13 B.C., to celebrate Augustus' return from three years of campaigning in Gaul and Spain, where he had been putting down rebellions and creating the administrative bureaucracy for the new empire. In form, the Ara resembles the kind of stone structures that earlier generations of Romans had built as places for offering sacrifices to the gods, except that it is much larger, and the carved friezes are among the great masterpieces of ancient sculpture. The four-sided outer-precinct walls are twenty-eight feet high, with marble steps leading up to the entrance. Inside, there is a carved marble altar. The sculptures on the southern precinct wall depict a religious procession, in which Augustus and members of his family are shown practicing rites which were part of Rome's republican past but had by then been laid aside. Augustus was trying to make the radical autocracy of the new empire acceptable to the Romans by combining it with old-fashioned values—keeping up appearances, respecting *mos maiorum* (the way the ancestors did things), and honoring the greatness of Rome.

When Augustus died, in 14 A.D., an ossuary containing his ashes was placed in a niche within the mausoleum; it remained there until it disappeared, probably during one of the barbarian sacks of Rome in the fifth century. Over the ensuing centuries, the tomb's marble was stripped off and employed for other buildings, and the mausoleum was used for a variety of purposes—as a bear-baiting venue, as a bullfighting arena, and, from 1908, as the site of Rome's main concert hall, which was built on top of the tomb.

In the twentieth century, the piazza became the centerpiece of Benito Mussolini's plans for Rome. Just before the Fascist Party took power, in 1922, Mussolini said, "Rome is our point of departure, our reference point. It is our symbol, or, if you will, our myth." He wanted Italians to see him as a second Augustus, and to see the Fascist empire, which he proclaimed after conquering Ethiopia in 1936, as the new Roman Empire. He used both new buildings and ancient ruins to make his case. "We must liber-

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ate all of ancient Rome from mediocre disfigurements," he said. "Rome cannot, must not simply be a modern city in the banal sense of the word."

Near the Colosseum, Mussolini demolished a whole neighborhood, razed a hill, and cut a wide, straight modern road between the Roman Forum and the Imperial Forums, the Via dei Fori Imperiali, so that crowds who gathered in Piazza Venezia to hear him thunder from his balcony about Italy's future could do so within thrilling sight of Italy's glorious past. Christopher Woodward, in his 2001 book, "In Ruins," observes that the remains of ancient Rome can have two opposing meanings—they can stand for the greatness of Rome, or for the passing of that greatness, and these interpretations have served Fascist and Christian ideologies, respectively. Mussolini took the decayed ruins that inspired artists and poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and turned them into the monumental ruins that delighted Hitler, when he visited Rome in 1938, and that continue to draw tourists from all over the world today.

Mussolini scooped Piazza Augusto out of the dense urban tissue of Rome. He demolished all the buildings within a thousand-square-yard area around the mausoleum of Augustus, leaving only the two Baroque churches standing. Two new buildings were added, to form the north and east sides of the piazza, each fronted by porticoes of squat, massive columns that recall Mussolini's pugnacious physiognomy. As with other Fascist works in Rome, the design was carried out by a committee of the leading Italian rationalist architects of the day, closely supervised by Il Duce himself. Rome's ancient architectural vernacular—domes, vaults, cylinders, prisms—was reinterpreted within the rationalists' interest in geometrical abstraction, resulting in buildings that were, at their best, modernist and classical at the same time. The design of Piazza Augusto, executed by a Jewish architect named Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, originally called for buildings that were only two stories high, a scale that worked better with the other elements in the piazza. However, by the time the buildings were erected they had succumbed to the Fascist tendency to grandiosity, and swelled to four stories.

When the design for these buildings was finished, Mussolini added the ideological key to the whole piazza—the Ara Pacis. He had it moved from its site, near Via del Corso, where it was buried beneath a sixteenth-century palazzo, and ordered it placed between the mausoleum and the river. Just as Augustus used Rome's republican heritage to lend a sense of continuity to the imperial regime, which in fact represented the end of that heritage, so would Mussolini use Rome's Augustan past to make the Fascist state seem inevitable—patrimony as destiny.

Morpurgo designed a simple, shell-like building to house the Ara Pacis—a mostly glass, cement, and travertine structure—with a flight of travertine steps leading up to it. However, by 1938

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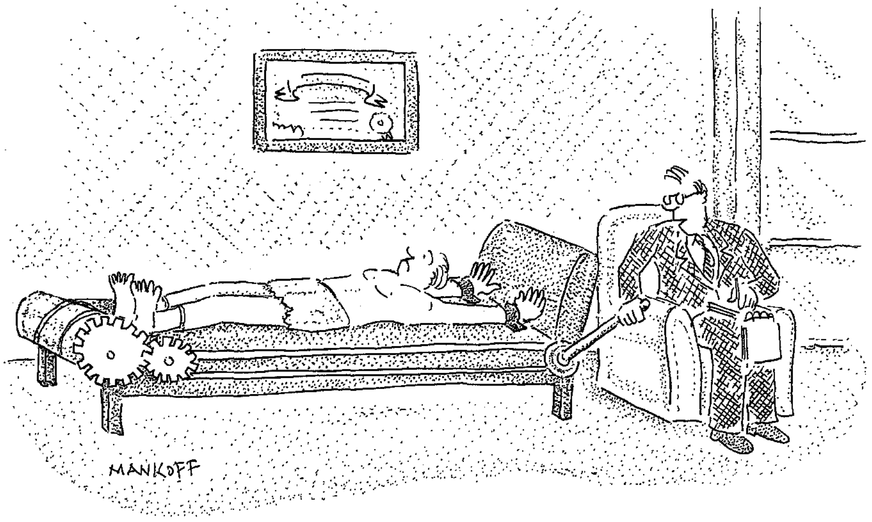
Hitler had forced the passage of the anti-Semitic Racial Laws, and Morpurgo was not permitted to remain in charge of the building. It was erected by a committee of engineers who loosely followed his design.

Some archeologists think that Mussolini planned to use Augustus' mausoleum as his own tomb. But when Mussolini was shot, by partisans, on April 28, 1945, his body was not interred in Piazza Augusto; instead, it was hung upside down outside a gas station in Milan, then buried in an unmarked grave, from which it was stolen by a Fascist loyalist, and then, after spending some time hidden in a monk's cell in a charterhouse outside Milan, it was eventually reinterred in Mussolini's home town of Predappio, in Emilia-Romagna, where the grave has become a popular tourist attraction. The piazza lost its status as prophecy and became, instead, a monumentally failed boast.

Meier worked on the drawings for the Ara Pacis project for eighteen months, designing the building with John Eisler, a senior architect at Richard Meier & Partners Architects in New York. He designs by hand, sketching with a 2B drafting pencil and giving finished drawings to his staff for digital rendering. Meier wanted something "light, transparent, and inviting," and also "optimistic," a word he often uses to characterize his own work and architecture in general. "I thought about the imposition Mussolini had made here," he said. "It's an imposition of a will on the environment—everything about it is huge. The columns are so massive that the colonnades read like all solids and no voids. It's out of scale with the rest of Rome, which has this very human scale."

In July, 1996, Meier made an elaborate presentation to city officials. His proposal looked a good deal like his museum in Barcelona. It featured a series of loggia-like structures organized around one wall—a single vertical plane that begins as an eight-foot wall at one end of the site and grows into the façade of the building. The Ara Pacis would be inside the middle loggia, surrounded by walls made of massive glass panels, each one weighing twelve hundred pounds. There was also room for a library, a bookstore, a café, and an auditorium capable of seating about a hundred and fifty people. Above the auditorium was a large round skylight, which looks like a reference to the oculus in the roof of the nearby Pantheon. It's not, Meier told me; he doesn't make historical references in his work. "It's a skylight, for letting light into the room." The total budget for the project was around twenty million dollars, a relatively modest sum, in part because Meier agreed to a fee that was consistent with the Italian pay scale for architects, which is well below what he is paid for his buildings in the United States and elsewhere.

Before construction began, the building had to be approved by the city's superintendent of cultural heritage and by two national superintendents, for archeology and for architecture. Every city has its battles between preservationists and developers, but in Rome the situation is greatly complicated by the fact that there are so many different Romes to preserve—classical Rome, medieval Rome, Renaissance Rome, Baroque Rome, eighteenth-century Rome, post-unification-of-Italy Rome, and Fascist Rome. Each successive Rome is built on top of (and in many cases out of) previous Romes—more than two thousand years of history is squashed into dozens of feet of dense rubble. (You can see these striations of civilization at the edges of some of the excavations around the city, and they look almost geological, so thoroughly have the building materials and artifacts been compacted.) This is Roma che Sparisce, or Vanishing Rome, the underground city that impinges on the surface city in countless ways, the Rome that Freud was thinking of when he famously used the city as a metaphor for the human unconscious in "Civilization and Its Discontents."



"Look, you're never going to make any progress in therapy if you keep blaming other people for your problems."

The office of superintendent dates from the Renaissance, when Rome was still a Papal state and the Church claimed control over all the ancient buildings and works of art in the city. Pope Leo X's superintendent was the painter Raphael. In the fifteen-tens, Raphael was "prefect of all marble and stone" within ten miles of the Vatican. Bernini was a superintendent for Pope Urban VIII, in the sixteen-thirties and forties. He removed the bronze beams that decorated the ceiling of the Pantheon's pronaos, melted them down, and turned them into his overwrought *baldacchino*, which towers over the high altar in St. Peter's Basilica.

Italy became a nation in 1861. Rome was annexed in 1870, and the Church was forced to surrender oversight of Rome's cultural heritage to the state. While ultimate control over the vast array of archeological and historical sites lies with the national authorities, their administration was confusingly divided between the state and the *comune*, or city government. The state claimed the Roman Forum and the Palatine Hill; the city took the Imperial Forums. The national superintendent of archeological heritage got control over buildings and artifacts that date from before 476, the official end of the western Roman Empire; the national superintendent of architectural heritage claimed buildings and artifacts created after 476;

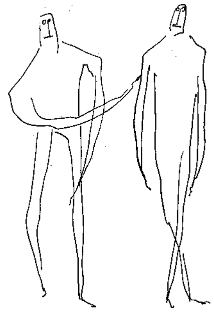
and the city's superintendent of cultural heritage became responsible for the city's museums and works of art, as well as public gardens and fountains.

Since Mussolini's death, these superintendents have treated the *centro storico* as if it were finished. With so much restoration and excavation to be done, it didn't make sense to waste resources on new buildings. By the nineteen-eighties, this attitude dominated Roman city planning. "Archeologists have the attitude that there is nothing you can build in the center of Rome that could possibly be as interesting as what's already there, either on the ground or under the ground," Francesco Garofalo, an architect in Rome, told me. "They would rather leave a lot empty, in the hope of one day excavating it, than allow anything to be built. It's insane."

Many of Francesco Rutelli's attempts to modernize Rome were frustrated by the superintendent of archeological heritage, Adriano La Regina. In 1997, for example, La Regina stopped Rutelli from building a traffic tunnel under Castel Sant' Angelo, near the river. The tunnel would have solved one of the biggest traffic problems in central Rome—the moat of automobiles that rings the castle and cuts it off from the surrounding neighborhood of Prati. But La Regina said no to the tunnel, because he felt that he had not been given sufficient assurances that the stability of the building would be preserved by the engineers.

During his twenty-eight years as archeological superintendent, which ended in January, La Regina was probably the most influential city planner in Rome, although his influence can be measured mainly in absences—buildings not built, roads removed, acreage excavated. When I visited him in his office, in the Roman Forum, the greatest excavation site in the world, he looked ready for his approaching retirement. He seemed worn out by long years of defending Vanishing Rome from the forces of modernity. Raising his glasses and peering closely at a map of the Roman Forum and the Imperial Forums from 1981, he pointed with pride to the parks in the Imperial Forums that he had turned into excavations and to another spot, just below the Capitoline Hill, where a modern road used to run. "You know in the film 'Roman Holiday,' when Gregory Peck takes the road on his scooter?" he asked. "We removed it." It was the only time during our interview that I saw him smile.

When I asked whether he thought he had been too aggressive in protecting Rome's archeological past, citing the frequently heard complaint that Rome has become a museum of the once great city it was, La Regina disagreed. "As proof, you only have to look at all the tourists who come to Rome to see that past," he said. The problem, he went on, is with politicians like Rutelli. Politicians need new roads and construction projects, because such projects employ potential voters and spread money around. "It is our duty to say no, when there is a danger to archeological monuments, but it becomes very difficult when you deal with politicians. Because while tourists bring a lot of money to the city, they don't vote—so there will almost always be a conflict there."



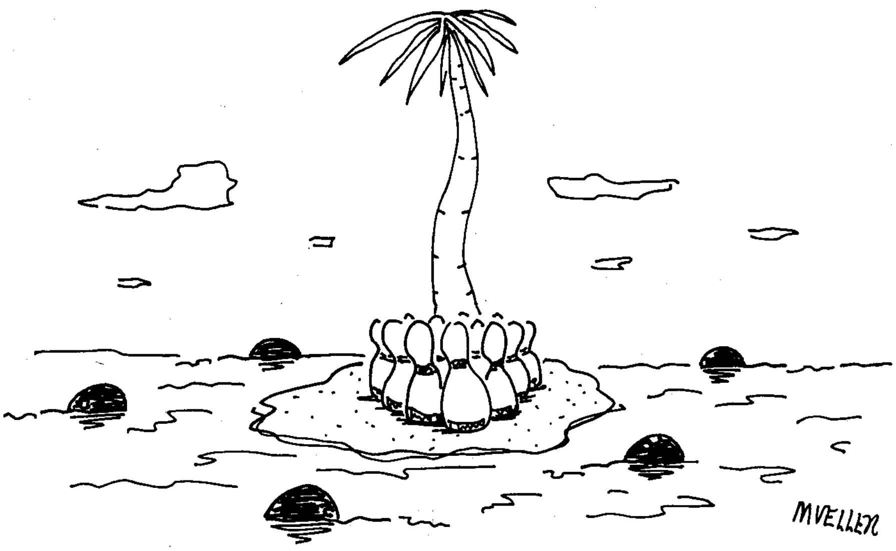
In the late nineteen-nineties, after giving his initial consent to Meier's building, La Regina took core samples around the site and found some limited evidence of ancient structures. The superintendent took more than two years to study these findings. In 2000, he finally gave his approval for work to proceed, although he reserved the right to do further excavations after the Morpurgo building came down. In 2001, he again stopped work, in order to excavate on the south and north sides of the site. The contractor, Fabrizio Di Amato, demanded that the city pay for the cost of equipment and workers who were now idle. Meanwhile, the superintendent of cultural heritage for the city of Rome, Dr. Eugenio La Rocca, had determined that the Ara Pacis was too fragile to move; the Meier museum would have to be built around it. The monument was packed up in protective plywood and scaffolding tubes. It wasn't until 2001, a year after the new museum was supposed to have been finished, that Morpurgo's building was demolished.

By this time, Rutelli was no longer mayor. He had decided to forgo the last months of his second term, in order to lead the center-left coalition against the center-right's leader, Silvio Berlusconi, in Italy's 2001 general election for prime minister. But the contest, which the press called "*il bello contro il ricco*," the handsome guy against the rich guy, wasn't a contest at all—the rich guy won overwhelmingly. Another man of the left, Walter Veltroni, became mayor of Rome. He let it be known that he was in favor of Meier's building, but he did not have the same personal involvement in the project that Rutelli had had, and did not make its completion a priority.

With the Berlusconi government in power, the antagonists of the Meier project found a friend in Vittorio Sgarbi, the new under-secretary to the Minister of Culture. Sgarbi is a conservative art critic who became a national figure in the nineteen-eighties as a frequent guest on a popular television show that was a cross between Charlie Rose and Jerry Springer. It featured Sgarbi's erudite discussions of matters of culture combined with outrageous personal attacks on other guests; Sgarbi delighted audiences by living up to the meaning of his name—"*sgarbato*" means "uncivil." On at least one occasion he came to blows with his fellow guests on national television. In the nineties, he had his own show, "Sgarbi Quotidiani," or "Daily Sgarbi," a monologue on current events and culture.

Sgarbi managed to present Meier's building as an example of Italy's careless attitude toward its heritage. An ambitious leftist politician and an arrogant world-famous architect were advancing their own agendas, without public review. "In America, you could never allow the mayor of New York and Richard Meier to build around the Statue of Liberty, let's say, without at least a public review," Sgarbi told me, when I went to the apartment where he was residing, which once belonged to Pope Innocent X and overlooks the Piazza Navona. "Only in Italy do we allow this."

Sgarbi also had a number of uncivil things to say about the appearance of Meier's building, describing it as "disgusting," and calling attention to how incongruous the blindingly white, industrial-looking building would seem among Rome's peachy neoclassical façades. "It looks more like a gas station in Dallas than a museum in Rome," he said. And Meier, after all, was not solving any of the central problems of the



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dente cariato; he was merely applying a glossy white modernist cap.

But with the old Morpurgo building already gone, and the scaffolding for the Meier building under construction, Sgarbi's options for stopping the project were limited. According to Meier, Sgarbi came to see him and begged him to change some part of the project, so that he could save face in Italy, but Meier refused. Sgarbi then demanded that the city excavate for an eighteenth-century piece of Roma che Sparisce, the Port of Ripetta, which was once situated under the southwestern end of the site. The port was a kind of amphibious piazza that featured graceful travertine steps leading down into the water; the steps were designed by the architect responsible for the Spanish Steps, Alessandro Specchi. The travertine had almost certainly been removed when the forty-foot walls along the Tiber were built, in the eighteen-seventies, and, in any case, the Lungotevere, the city's main north-south traffic artery, was now on top of it. Nevertheless, Superintendent La Rocca eventually agreed to undertake additional excavations. The negotiations delayed construction another year.

These excavations, La Rocca told me when I went to see him at his office, in Piazza Lovatelli, in the Ghetto, "determined that there was hardly anything left of the port down below." But, just in case, the superintendents had already asked Meier to eliminate part of the aesthetically crucial wall, and to change the foundations of the building so as not to impinge on any possible remains. (The building now balances on a poured-concrete raft.) "So that in the future," La Rocca went on, "if anyone does want to go down and reopen the Port of Ripetta, they will be able to."

Thanks, in part, to Sgarbi's efforts, by 2002 the Meier building had become an international symbol of the shortcomings of modernism. Meier may have seen his building as a humanist antidote to the totalitarian architecture in the piazza, but to its critics the building represented a different kind of Fascism—the globalization of the International Style, which has littered the great capitals of Europe with its cold boxes. Marc Breitman, a well-known French architect, feared that the Meier building could be "a Pandora's box" for a modernist takeover of the historic center of Rome, raising the alarming prospect of Gehry-style blobs following Meier's white boxes. Léon Krier, of Luxembourg, commented, "The municipality's decision to rebuild the enclosure around the Ara Pacis in a modernist style, which is willfully anti-classical, is an act of provocation of extreme gravity." In 2002, Samir Younés, the director of the Rome Studies program at the University of Notre Dame's architecture school, published a book of counterproposals for the site, which also contained many of the arguments against the building. Younés told me, "A building should take account of the sense of place. What I object to about the Meier building is that it is a type of industrial architecture that could be in Barcelona—indeed, it looks a good deal like the Meier building in Barcelona—or Atlanta or Athens; it completely denies the sense of place."

Terence Riley, the chief curator of architecture and design for the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, argues that Meier was a good choice for Rome. "Of all the well-known contemporary architects, Meier is probably the most classical, in the sense of proportion, and in his sympathy with urban fabric," he said. "Roman architecture has been exported to virtually every corner of the globe—the neoclassical style is the vernacular for almost all important civic, ecclesiastical, or commercial buildings from Shanghai to New York—and to erect barriers that prevent the flow of style from moving the other way seems capricious." He added, "I think the attempt to create a kind of urban taxidermy in Rome is unnatural."

By the beginning of 2003, it appeared as if the project might remain entangled in bureaucratic spaghetti forever. The contractor, Di Amato, was still losing money, and was threatening to make the superintendents pay. Meier was busy with other buildings, among them the Jubilee Church on the outskirts of Rome (though Meier's church was commissioned after his museum, the Vatican had proved to be a considerably more pliable client than the *comune*, and the church was nearing completion); the museum for the Burda Collection, in Baden-Baden; and condominiums on Perry Street, in Manhattan's West Village. Romans were frescoing the construction walls around the Ara Pacis site with graffiti.

Meanwhile, a meeting had been arranged for all three superintendents and some outside experts to discuss the future of the piazza. Meier's project manager, Nigel Ryan, and the contractor attended the meeting as unofficial observers. La Regina also invited Leonardo Benevolo, the author of "The History of the City" and one of the most influential postwar Italian *urbanisti;* in his 1977 book "Roma Oggi," Benevolo, a radical conservative, advocated destroying most post-1870 buildings in the *centro storico* and replacing them with parks. The meeting took place in the executive construction trailer on the site, around a large table. A scale model of the Ara Pacis museum, made by local architecture students, was in the center of the table. Someone had placed miniature human figures inside the model, to give it a sense of scale; oddly, the figures were dressed in eighteenth-century clothing.

Stephen Natanson, a filmmaker who has made a documentary about Meier's Ara Pacis project for Italian television, recorded the proceedings on film.

Shortly after the meeting began, the superintendent of architectural heritage, Roberto Di Paola, said that he wasn't satisfied with the Port of Ripetta excavations, and suggested that the whole piazza be dug down to Year Zero. Benevolo enthusiastically endorsed Di Paola's notion, and recommended tearing down the Fascist buildings, too; he had brought along sketches showing the piazza without them. La Regina seemed reluctant to back Di Paola in continuing the dig, in part because Di Paola had always refused to allow La Regina to excavate some gardens under his authority in the Imperial Forums. The contractor then said that if the *comune* really wished to stop the project and dig a big hole, the *comune* was going to have to reimburse him for all the money he would lose. This diminished Di Paola's enthusiasm for the monumental pit, and the meeting broke up shortly afterward with an informal agreement to allow the work to proceed. Two months later, the new foundation was poured.

One hot morning last summer, Richard Meier came to Piazza Augusto Imperatore. He toured the construction site with Superintendent La Rocca. Construction was far from finished: only the steel frame and concrete floors were in place. Without the interiors, the structure looked like a big-box store. The two men walked amid the scaffolding and piles of rebar, in the heat and dust, trailed by a crowd of builders, suppliers, designers, and journalists. Meier endured the attention with an air of noblesse oblige, but La Rocca became irritated by the scene. When one paparazzo elbowed him aside to get a picture of *il maestro* inspecting a sample "Fire Exit" sign, La Rocca cried, "*Non è possibile!*"

La Rocca was eager to see the view of the piazza from the roof of the museum; he had not been up there before. But getting to the roof required climbing three and a half flights of construction ladders and squeezing through the narrow openings at the top of each one. Meier is seventy and favors his right side when he walks. His snow-white, Yeatsian-length hair gives him the saintly mien of an artist in his master years. He had flown to Rome the night before from Moscow, where he had been meeting with a potential client, and he was flying back to New York that afternoon. Climbing construction ladders in the terrible heat was probably not at the top of his list of things to do in Rome. He couldn't squeeze his broad shoulders through the openings at the top of each ladder without twisting sideways. After the first ladder, he removed his double-breasted gray suit jacket. By the time he reached the third ladder his white shirt was splotched with sweat and his black wingtips were pale with construction dust.

"You've got to be in shape to be an architect," he said, pausing to catch his breath.

Emerging finally on the roof, Meier looked at the mausoleum and the surrounding square, with its two thousand years of building. Overgrown and unkempt, Augustus' tomb looked more like a symbol of Rome's transience than of its lasting greatness. "Rome reminds me of a man who lives by exhibiting to travellers his grandmother's corpse," James Joyce remarked, in a letter to his brother, and one gets this feeling looking at Augustus' tomb. It represents the futility of architecture to stave off the inevitable ruination of all things.

As for the piazza, it is no closer to being a functional public space than it was before Meier's building began going up. When he first got the commission, Meier wanted it to include the whole piazza, but he no longer felt that way. He wasn't sure what to do about the piazza, although he thought the solution might have to be radical. "Maybe you just cut it all down to street level and start again," he told me.

La Rocca moved toward the shade below; already the ladders were hot to the touch. But the architect, bareheaded in the sun, continued to stare out at the forlorn piazza. Finally, Meier started down the ladders, his legs trembling slightly on the rungs.

At the bottom, the client and the architect went over to look at the Ara Pacis. It was still boxed up, with the building going up all around it, poised between being a wreck, a ruin, and the rebirth of Rome. Four massive poured-concrete columns framed the plywood box.

La Rocca seemed overjoyed with the prospect. "It is as it was," he said in a solemn whisper.

"It will be," Meier agreed. ♦

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THE CLIMATE OF MAN—II

The curse of Akkad.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

The world's first empire was established forty-three hundred years ago, between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The details of its founding, by Sargon of Akkad, have come down to us in a form somewhere between history and myth. Sargon—Sharru-kin, in the language of Akkadian—means "true king"; almost certainly, though, he was a usurper. As a baby, Sargon was said to have been discovered, Moses-like, floating in a basket. Later, he became cupbearer to the ruler of Kish, one of ancient Babylonia's most powerful cities. Sargon dreamed that his master, Ur-Zababa, was about to be drowned by the goddess Inanna in a river of blood. Hearing about the dream, Ur-Zababa decided to have Sargon eliminated. How this plan failed is unknown; no text relating the end of the story has ever been found.

Until Sargon's reign, Babylonian cities like Kish, and also Ur and Uruk and Umma, functioned as independent city-states. Sometimes they formed brief alliances—cuneiform tablets attest to strategic marriages celebrated and diplomatic gifts exchanged—but mostly they seem to have been at war with one another. Sargon first subdued Babylonia's fractious cities, then went on to conquer, or at least sack, lands like Elam, in present-day Iran. He presided over his empire from the city of Akkad, the ruins of which are believed to lie south of Baghdad. It was written that "daily five thousand four hundred men ate at his presence," meaning, presumably, that he maintained a huge standing army. Eventually, Akkadian hegemony extended as far as the Khabur plains, in northeastern Syria, an area prized for its grain production. Sargon came to be known as "king of the world"; later, one of his descendants enlarged this title to "king of the four corners of the universe."

Akkadian rule was highly centralized, and in this way anticipated the administrative logic of empires to come. The Akkadians levied taxes, then used the proceeds to support a vast network of local bureaucrats. They introduced standardized weights and measures—the *gur* equalled roughly three hundred litres—and imposed a uniform dating system, under which each year was assigned the name of a major event that had recently occurred: for instance, "the year that Sargon destroyed the city of Mari." Such was the level of systematization that even the shape and the layout of accounting tablets were imperially prescribed. Akkad's wealth was reflected in, among other things, its art work, the refinement and naturalism of which were unprecedented.

Sargon ruled, supposedly, for fifty-six years. He was succeeded by his two sons, who reigned for a total of twenty-four years, and then by a grandson, Naram-sin, who declared himself a god. Naram-sin was, in turn, succeeded by his son. Then, suddenly, Akkad collapsed. During one three-year period, four men each, briefly, claimed the throne. "Who was king? Who was not king?" the register known as the Sumerian King List asks, in what may be the first recorded instance of political irony.

The lamentation "The Curse of Akkad" was written within a century of the empire's fall. It attributes Akkad's demise to an outrage against the gods. Angered by a pair of inauspicious oracles, Naram-sin plunders the temple of Enlil, the god of wind and storms, who, in retaliation, decides to destroy both him and his people:

> For the first time since cities were built and founded,
> The great agricultural tracts produced no grain,
> The inundated tracts produced no fish,
> The irrigated orchards produced neither syrup nor wine,
> The gathered clouds did not rain, the *masgurum* did not grow.
> At that time, one shekel's worth of oil was only one-half quart,

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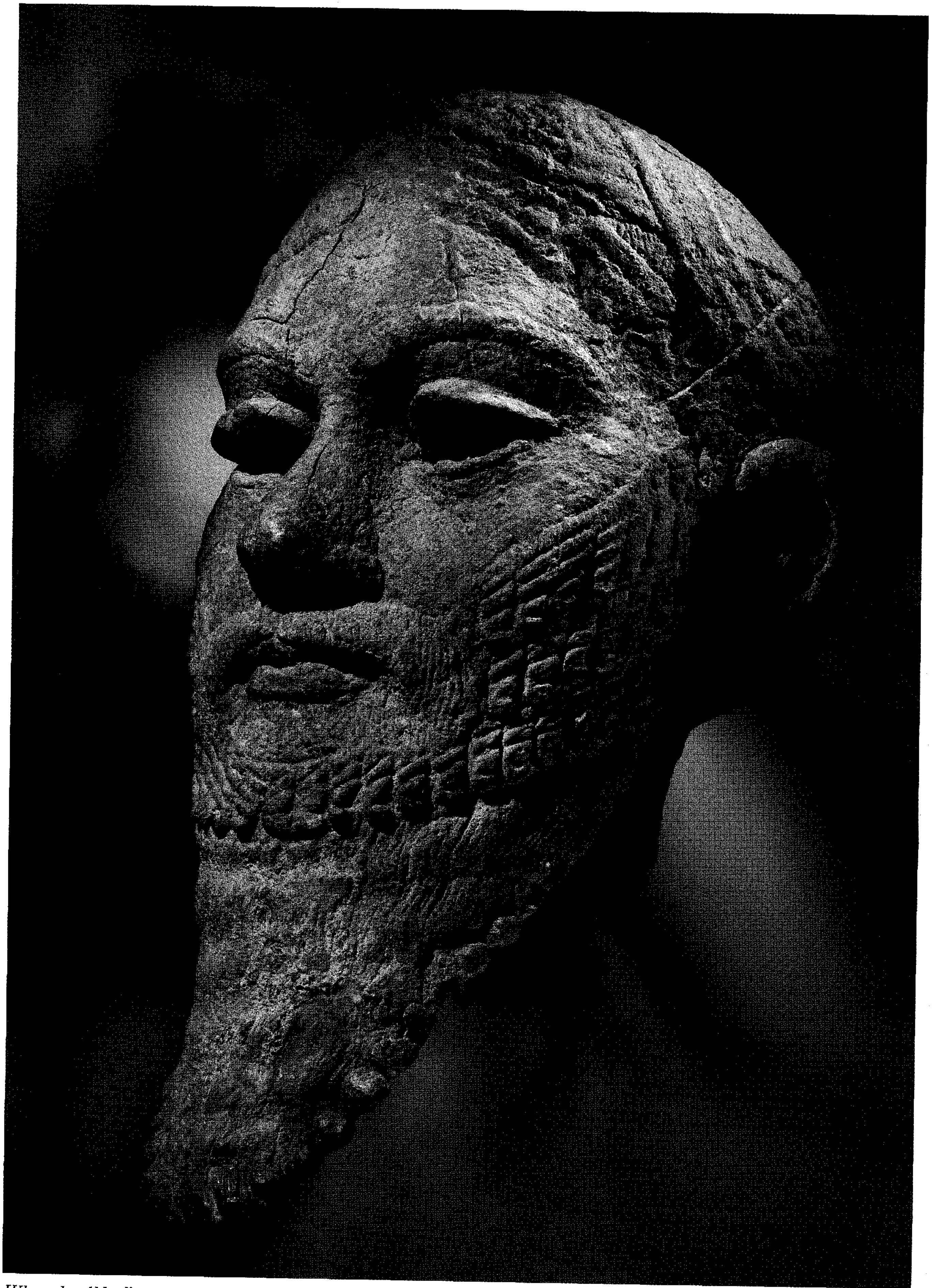


When the Akkadian empire collapsed, around 2200 B.C., even the earthworms died. Photograph by Joseph Coscia, Jr.

One shekel's worth of grain was only one-half quart. . . .
These sold at such prices in the markets of all the cities!
He who slept on the roof, died on the roof,
He who slept in the house, had no burial,
People were flailing at themselves from hunger.

For many years, the events described in "The Curse of Akkad" were thought, like the details of Sargon's birth, to be purely fictional.

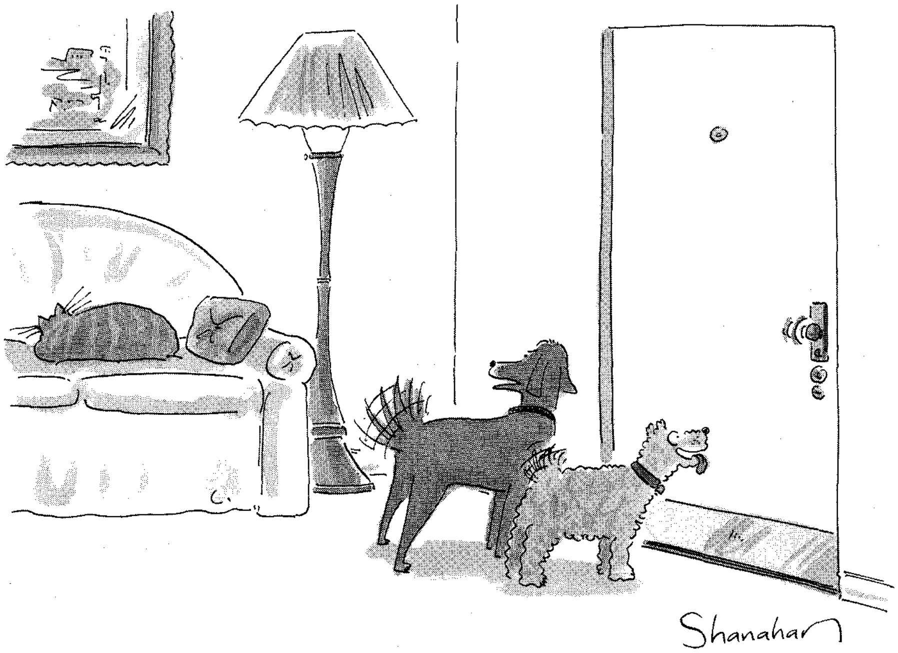
In 1978, after scanning a set of maps at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library, a university archeologist named Harvey Weiss spotted a promising-looking mound at the confluence of two dry riverbeds in the Khabur plains, near the Iraqi border. He approached the Syrian government for permission to excavate the mound, and, somewhat to his surprise, it was almost immediately granted. Soon, he had uncovered a lost city, which in ancient times was known as Shekhna and today is called Tell Leilan.

Over the next ten years, Weiss, working with a team of students and local laborers, proceeded to uncover an acropolis, a crowded residential neighborhood reached by a paved road, and a large block of grain-storage rooms. He found that the residents of Tell Leilan had raised barley and several varieties of wheat, that they had used carts to transport their crops, and that in their writing they had imitated the style of their more sophisticated neighbors to the south. Like most cities in the region at the time, Tell Leilan had a rigidly organized, state-run economy: people received rations—so many litres of barley and so many of oil—based on how old they were and what kind of work they performed. From the time of the Akkadian empire, thousands of similar potsherds were discovered, indicating that residents had received their rations in mass-produced, one-litre vessels. After examining these and other artifacts, Weiss constructed a time line of the city's history, from its origins as a small farming village (around 5000 B.C.), to its growth into an independent city of some thirty thousand people (2600 B.C.), and on to its reorganization under imperial rule (2300 B.C.).

Wherever Weiss and his team dug, they also encountered a layer of dirt that contained no signs of human habitation. This layer, which was more than three feet deep, corresponded to the years 2200 to 1900 B.C., and it indicated that, around the time of Akkad's fall, Tell Leilan had been completely abandoned. In 1991, Weiss sent soil samples from Tell Leilan to a lab for analysis. The results showed that, around the year 2200 B.C., even the city's earthworms had died out. Eventually, Weiss came to believe that the lifeless soil of Tell Leilan and the end of the Akkadian empire were products of the same phenomenon—a drought so prolonged and so severe that, in his words, it represented an example of "climate change."

Weiss first published his theory, in the journal *Science*, in August, 1993. Since then, the list of cultures whose demise has been linked to climate change has continued to grow. They include the Classic Mayan civilization, which collapsed at the height of its development, around 800 A.D.; the Tiwanaku civilization, which thrived near Lake Titicaca, in the Andes, for more than a millennium, then disintegrated around 1100 A.D.; and the Old Kingdom of Egypt, which collapsed around the same time as the Akkadian empire. (In an account eerily reminiscent of "The Curse of Akkad," the Egyptian sage Ipuwer described the anguish of the period: "Lo, the desert claims the land. Towns are ravaged. . . . Food is lacking. . . . Ladies suffer like maidservants. Lo, those who were entombed are cast on high grounds.") In each of these cases, what began as a provocative hypothesis has, as new information has emerged, come to seem more and more compelling. For example, the notion that Mayan civilization had been undermined by climate change was first proposed in the late nineteen-eighties, at which point there was little climatological evidence to support it. Then, in the mid-nineteen-nineties, American scientists studying sediment cores from Lake Chichancanab, in north-central Yucatán, reported that precipitation patterns in the region had indeed shifted during the ninth and tenth centuries, and that this shift had led to periods of prolonged drought. More recently, a group of researchers examining ocean-sediment cores collected off the coast of Venezuela produced an even more detailed record of rainfall in the area. They found that the region experienced a series of severe, "multi-year drought events" beginning around 750 A.D. The collapse of the Classic Mayan civilization, which has been described as "a demographic disaster as profound as any other in human history," is thought to have cost millions of lives.

The climate shifts that affected past cultures predate industrialization by hundreds—or, in the case of the Akkadians, thousands—of years. They reflect the climate system's innate variability and were caused by forces that, at this point, can only be guessed at. By contrast, the climate shifts predicted for the coming cen-



"Infidel!"

tury are attributable to forces that are now well known. Exactly how big these shifts will be is a matter of both intense scientific interest and the greatest possible historical significance. In this context, the discovery that large and sophisticated cultures have already been undone by climate change presents what can only be called an uncomfortable precedent.

The Goddard Institute for Space Studies, or GISS, is situated just south of Columbia University's main campus, at the corner of Broadway and West 112th Street. The institute is not well marked, but most New Yorkers would probably recognize the building: its ground floor is home to Tom's Restaurant, the coffee shop made famous by "Seinfeld."

GISS, an outpost of NASA, started out, forty-four years ago, as a planetary-research center; today, its major function is making forecasts about climate change. GISS employs about a hundred and fifty people, many of whom spend their days working on calculations that may—or may not—end up being incorporated in the institute's climate model. Some work on algorithms that describe the behavior of the atmosphere, some on the behavior of the oceans, some on vegetation, some on clouds, and some on making sure that all these algorithms, when they are combined, produce results that seem consistent with the real world. (Once, when some refinements were made to the model, rain nearly stopped falling over the rain forest.) The latest version of the GISS model, called ModelE, consists of a hundred and twenty-five thousand lines of computer code.

GISS's director, James Hansen, occupies a spacious, almost comically cluttered office on the institute's seventh floor. (I must have expressed some uneasiness the first time I visited him, because the following day I received an e-mail assuring me that the office was "a lot better organized than it used to be.") Hansen, who is sixty-three, is a spare man with a lean face and a fringe of brown hair. Although he has probably done as much to publicize the dangers of global warming as any other scientist, in person he is reticent almost to the point of shyness. When I asked him how he had come to play such a prominent role, he just shrugged. "Circumstances," he said.

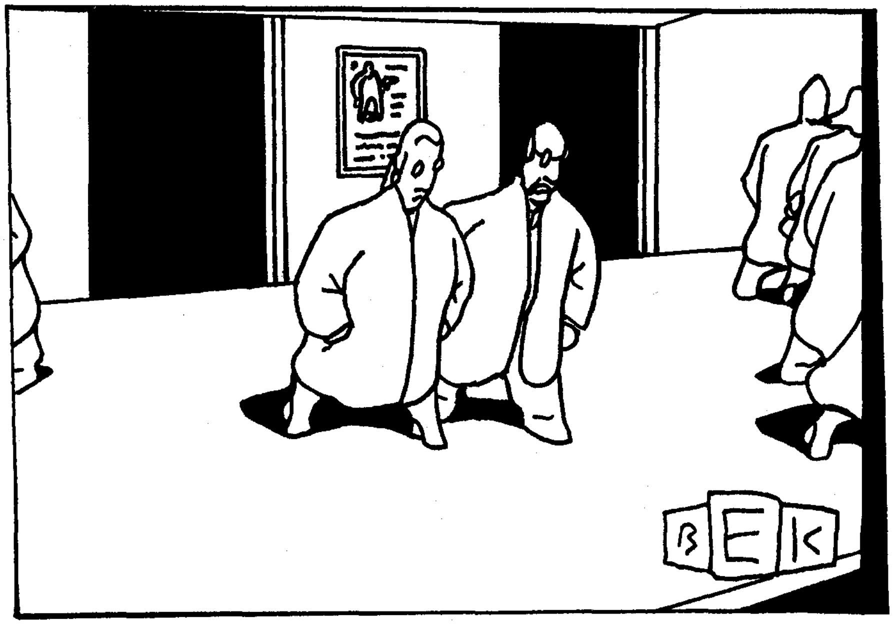
Hansen first became interested in climate change in the mid-nineteen-seventies. Under the direction of James Van Allen (for whom the Van Allen radiation belts are named), he had written his doctoral dissertation on the climate of Venus. In it, he had proposed that the planet, which has an average surface temperature of eight hundred and sixty-seven degrees Fahrenheit, was kept warm by a smoggy haze; soon afterward, a space probe showed that Venus was actually insulated by an atmosphere that consists of ninety-six per cent carbon dioxide. When solid data began to show what was happening to greenhouse-gas levels on earth, Hansen became, in his words, "captivated." He decided that a planet whose atmosphere could change in the course of a human lifetime was more interesting than one that was going to continue, for all intents and purposes, to broil away forever. A group of scientists at NASA had put together a computer program to try to improve weather forecasting using satellite data. Hansen and a team of half a dozen other researchers set out to modify it, in order to make longer-range forecasts about what would happen to global temperatures as greenhouse gases continued to accumulate. The project, which resulted in the first version of the GISS climate model, took nearly seven years to complete.

At that time, there was little empirical evidence to support the notion that the earth was warming. Instrumental temperature records go back, in a consistent fashion, only to the mid-nineteenth century. They show that average global temperatures rose through the first half of the twentieth century, then dipped in the nineteen-fifties and sixties. Nevertheless, by the early nineteen-eighties Hansen had gained enough confidence in his model to begin to make a series of increasingly audacious predictions. In 1981, he forecast that "carbon dioxide warming should emerge from the noise of natural climate variability" around the year 2000. During the exceptionally hot summer of 1988, he appeared before a Senate subcommittee and announced that he was "ninety-nine per cent" sure that "global warming is affecting our planet now." And in the summer of 1990 he offered to bet a roomful of fellow-scientists a hundred dollars that either that year or one of the following two years would be the warmest on record. To qualify, the year would have to set a record not only for land temperatures but also for sea-surface temperatures and for temperatures in the lower atmosphere. Hansen won the bet in six months.

Like all climate models, GISS's divides the world into a series of boxes. Thirty-three hundred and twelve boxes cover the earth's surface, and this pattern is repeated twenty times moving up through the atmosphere, so that the whole arrangement might be thought of as a set of enormous checkerboards stacked on top of one another. Each box represents an area of four degrees latitude by five degrees longitude. (The height of the box varies depending on altitude.) In the real world, of course, such a large area would have an incalculable number of features; in the world of the model, features such as lakes and forests and, indeed, whole mountain ranges are reduced to a limited set of properties, which are then expressed as numerical approximations. Time in this grid world moves ahead for the most part in discrete, half-hour intervals, meaning that a new set of calculations is performed for each box for every thirty minutes that is supposed to have elapsed in actuality. Depending on what part of the globe a box represents, these calculations may involve dozens of different algorithms, so that a model run that is supposed to simulate climate conditions over the next hundred years involves more than a quadrillion separate operations. A single run of the GISS model, done on a supercomputer, usually takes about a month.

Very broadly speaking, there are two types of equations that go into a climate model. The first group expresses fundamental physical principles, like the conservation of energy and the law of gravity. The second group describes—the term of art is "parameterize"—patterns and interactions that have been observed in nature but may be only partly understood, or processes that occur on a small scale, and have to be averaged out over huge spaces. Here, for example, is a tiny piece of ModelE, written in the computer language FORTRAN, which deals with the formation of clouds:

```
C**** COMPUTE THE AUTOCONVERSION
RATE OF CLOUD WATER TO PRECIPITATION
   RHO=1.E5*PL(L)/(RGAS*TL(L))
```



"I thought the vaguely homoerotic undertones would be better."

• •

```
    TEM=RHO*WMX(L)/(WCONST*FCLD+
       1.E-20)
    IF(LHX.EQ.LHS) TEM=RHO*WMX(L)/
       (WMUI*FCLD+1.E-20)
    TEM=TEM*TEM
    IF(TEM.GT.10.) TEM=10.
    CM1=CM0
    IF(BANDF) CM1=CM0*CBF
    IF(LHX.EQ.LHS) CM1=CM0
    CM=CM1*(1.-1./EXP(TEM*TEM))+1.
       *100.*(PREBAR(L+1)+
    * PRECNVL(L+1)*BYDTsrc)
    IF(CM.GT.BYDTsrc) CM=BYDTsrc
    PREP(L)=WMX(L)*CM
    END IF
C**** FORM CLOUDS ONLY IF RH GT RH00
 219 IF(RH1(L).LT.RH00(L)) GO TO 220.
```

All climate models treat the laws of physics in the same way, but, since they parameterize phenomena like cloud formation differently, they come up with different results. (At this point, there are some fifteen major climate models in operation around the globe.) Also, because the real-world forces influencing the climate are so numerous, different models tend, like medical students, to specialize in different processes. GISS's model, for example, specializes in the behavior of the atmosphere, other models in the behavior of the oceans, and still others in the behavior of land surfaces and ice sheets.

Last fall, I attended a meeting at GISS which brought together members of the institute's modelling team. When I arrived, about twenty men and five women were sitting in battered chairs in a conference room across from Hansen's office. At that particular moment, the institute was performing a series of runs for the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The runs were overdue, and apparently the I.P.C.C. was getting impatient. Hansen flashed a series of charts on a screen on the wall summarizing some of the results obtained so far.

The obvious difficulty in verifying any particular climate model or climate-model run is the prospective nature of the results. For this reason, models are often run into the past, to see how well they reproduce trends that have already been observed. Hansen told the group that he was pleased with how ModelE had reproduced the aftermath of the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, in the Philippines, which took place in June of 1991. Volcanic eruptions release huge quantities of sulfur dioxide—Pinatubo produced some twenty million tons of the gas—which, once in the stratosphere, condenses into tiny sulfate droplets. These droplets, or aerosols, tend to cool the earth by reflecting sunlight back into space. (Man-made aerosols, produced by burning coal, oil, and biomass, also reflect sunlight and are a countervailing force to greenhouse warming, albeit one with serious health consequences of its own.) This cooling effect lasts as long as the aerosols remain suspended in the atmosphere. In 1992, global temperatures, which had been rising sharply, fell by half of a degree. Then they began to climb again. ModelE had succeeded in simulating this effect to within nine-hundredths of a degree. "That's a pretty nice test," Hansen observed laconically.

One day, when I was talking to Hansen in his office, he pulled a pair of photographs out of his briefcase. The first showed a chubby-faced five-year-old girl holding some miniature Christmas-tree lights in front of an even chubbier-faced five-month-old baby. The girl, Hansen told me, was his granddaughter Sophie and the boy was his new grandson, Connor. The caption on the first picture read, "Sophie explains greenhouse warming." The caption on the second photograph, which showed the baby smiling gleefully, read, "Connor gets it."

When modellers talk about what drives the climate, they focus on what they call "forcings." A forcing is any ongoing process or discrete event that alters the energy of the system. Examples of natural forcings include, in addition to volcanic eruptions, periodic shifts in the earth's orbit and changes in the sun's output, like those linked to sunspots. Many climate shifts of the past have no known forcing associated with them; for instance, no one is certain what brought about the so-called Little Ice Age, which began in Europe some five hundred years ago. A very large forcing, meanwhile, should produce a commensurately large—and obvious—effect. One GISS scientist put it to me this way: "If the sun went supernova, there's no question that we could model what would happen."

Adding carbon dioxide, or any other greenhouse gas, to the atmosphere by, say, burning fossil fuels or levelling forests is, in the language of climate science, an anthropogenic forcing. Since pre-industrial times, the concentration of CO_2 in the earth's atmosphere has risen by roughly a third, from 280 parts per million to 378 p.p.m. During the same period, concentrations of methane, an even more powerful (but more short-lived) greenhouse gas, have more than doubled, from .78 p.p.m. to 1.76 p.p.m. Scientists measure forcings in terms of watts per square metre, or w/m^2, by which they mean that a certain number of watts of energy have been added (or, in the case of a negative forcing, subtracted) for every single square metre of the earth's surface. The size of the greenhouse forcing is estimated, at this point, to be 2.5 w/m^2. A miniature Christmas light gives off about four tenths of a watt of energy, mostly in the form of heat, so that, in effect (as Sophie supposedly explained to Connor), we have covered the earth with tiny bulbs, six for every square metre. These bulbs are burning twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, year in and year out.

If greenhouse gases were held constant at today's levels, it is estimated that it would take several decades for the full impact of the forcing that is already in place to be felt. This is because raising the earth's temperature involves not only warming the air and the surface of the land but also melting sea ice, liquefying glaciers, and, most significant, heating the oceans—all processes that require tremendous amounts of energy. (Imagine trying to thaw a gallon of ice cream or warm a pot of water using an Easy-Bake oven.) It could be argued that the delay that is built into the system is socially useful, because it enables us—with the help of climate models—to prepare for what lies ahead, or that it is socially disastrous, because it allows us to keep adding CO_2 to the atmosphere while fobbing the impacts off on our children and grandchildren. Either way, if current trends continue, which is to say, if steps are not taken to reduce emissions, carbon-dioxide levels will probably reach 500 parts per million—nearly double pre-industrial levels—sometime around the middle of the century. By that point, of course, the forcing associated with greenhouse gases will also have increased, to four watts per square metre and possibly more. For comparison's sake, it is worth keeping in mind that the total forcing that ended the last ice age—a forcing that was eventually sufficient to melt mile-thick ice sheets and raise global sea levels by four hundred feet—is estimated to have been just six and a half watts per square metre.

There are two ways to operate a climate model. In the first, which is known as a transient run, greenhouse gases are slowly added to the simulated atmosphere—just as they would be to the real atmosphere—and the model forecasts what the effect of these additions will be at any given moment. In the second, greenhouse gases are added to the atmosphere all at once, and the model is run at these new levels until the climate has fully adjusted to the forcing by reaching a new equilibrium. Not surprisingly, this is known as an equilibrium run. For doubled CO_2, equilibrium runs of the GISS model predict that average global temperatures will rise by 4.9 degrees Fahrenheit. Only about a third of this increase is directly attributable to more greenhouse gases; the rest is a result of indirect effects, the most important among them being the so-called "water-vapor feedback." (Since warmer air holds more moisture, higher temperatures are expected to produce an atmosphere containing more water vapor, which is itself a greenhouse gas.) GISS's forecast is on the low end of the most recent projections; the Hadley Centre model, which is run by the British Met Office, predicts that for doubled CO_2 the eventual temperature rise will be 6.3 degrees Fahrenheit, while Japan's National Institute for Environmental Studies predicts 7.7 degrees.

In the context of ordinary life, a warming of 4.9, or even of 7.7, degrees may not seem like much to worry about; in the course of a normal summer's day, after all, air temperatures routinely rise by twenty degrees or more. Average global temperatures, however, have practically nothing to do with ordinary life. In the middle of the last glaciation, Manhattan, Boston, and Chicago were deep under ice, and sea levels were so low that Siberia and Alaska were connected by a land bridge nearly a thousand miles wide. At that point, average global temperatures were roughly ten degrees colder than they are today. Conversely, since our species evolved, average temperatures have never been much more than two or three degrees higher than they are right now.

This last point is one that climatologists find particularly significant. By studying Antarctic ice cores, researchers have been able to piece together a record

THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA, REVISITED
What was the thread count of those sheets? Like twelve?
100% polyester, too, I bet.
AND, if you think I didn't notice that generic-brand CANNED PEA, you're sadly mistaken.

both of the earth's temperature and of the composition of its atmosphere going back four full glacial cycles. (Temperature data can be extracted from the isotopic composition of the ice, and the makeup of the atmosphere can be reconstructed by analyzing tiny bubbles of trapped air.) What this record shows is that the planet is now nearly as warm as it has been at any point in the last four hundred and twenty thousand years. A possible consequence of even a four- or five-degree temperature rise—on the low end of projections for doubled CO_2—is that the world will enter a completely new climate regime, one with which modern humans have no prior experience. Meanwhile, at 378 p.p.m., CO_2 levels are significantly higher today than they have been at any other point in the Antarctic record. It is believed that the last time carbon-dioxide levels were in this range was three and a half million years ago, during what is known as the mid-Pliocene warm period, and they likely have not been much above it for tens of millions of years. A scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) put it to me—only half-jokingly—this way: "It's true that we've had higher CO_2 levels before. But, then, of course, we also had dinosaurs."

David Rind is a climate scientist who has worked at GISS since 1978. Rind acts as a trouble-shooter for the institute's model, scanning reams of numbers known as diagnostics, trying to catch problems, and he also works with GISS's Climate Impacts Group. (His office, like Hansen's, is filled with dusty piles of computer printouts.) Although higher temperatures are the most obvious and predictable result of increased CO_2, other, second-order consequences—rising sea levels, changes in vegetation, loss of snow cover—are likely to be just as significant. Rind's particular interest is how CO_2 levels will affect water supplies, because, as he put it to me, "you can't have a plastic version of water."

One afternoon, when I was talking to Rind in his office, he mentioned a visit that President Bush's science adviser, John Marburger, had paid to GISS a few years earlier. "He said, 'We're really interested in adaptation to climate change,' " Rind recalled. "Well, what does 'adaptation' mean?" He rummaged through one of his many file cabinets and finally pulled out a paper that he had published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research* entitled "Potential Evapotranspiration and the Likelihood of Future Drought." In much the same way that wind velocity is measured using the Beaufort scale, water availability is measured using what's known as the Palmer Drought Severity Index. Different climate models offer very different predictions about future water availability; in the paper, Rind applied the criteria used in the Palmer index to GISS's model and also to a model operated by NOAA's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory. He found that as carbon-dioxide levels rose the world began to experience more and more serious water shortages, starting near the equator and then spreading toward the poles. When he applied the index to the GISS model for doubled CO_2, it showed most of the continental United States to be suffering under severe drought conditions. When he applied the index to the G.F.D.L. model, the results were even more dire. Rind created two maps to illustrate these findings. Yellow represented a forty-to-sixty-per-cent chance of summertime drought, ochre a sixty-to-eighty-per-cent chance, and brown an eighty-to-a-hundred-per-cent chance. In the first map, showing the GISS results, the Northeast was yellow, the Midwest was ochre, and the Rocky Mountain states and California were brown. In the second, showing the G.F.D.L. results, brown covered practically the entire country.

"I gave a talk based on these drought indices out in California to water-resource managers," Rind told me. "And they said, 'Well, if that happens, forget it.' There's just no way they could deal with that."

He went on, "Obviously, if you get drought indices like these, there's no adaptation that's possible. But let's say it's not that severe. What adaptation are we talking about? Adaptation in 2020?

IT ALL COMES BACK

We placed the cake, with its four candles
poking out of thick soft frosting, on the seat
of his chair at the head of the table
for just a moment, while we unfolded and spread
Spanish cloth over Vermont maple.

Suddenly he stepped from the group
of schoolmates and parents and family friends
and ran to the table, and just as someone cried
No, no! Don't sit! he sat on his chair and his cake,
and the room broke into groans and guffaws.

Actually it was pretty funny, we all
started yelping our heads off, and actually
it wasn't in the least funny. He ran to me,
and I picked him up but I was still laughing,
and in indignant fury he jabbed his thumbs

into the corners of my mouth, grasped
my cheeks, and yanked—he was so muscled
and so outraged I felt as if he might rip
my whole face off, and then I realized
that was exactly what he was trying to do.

It came to me: I was one of his keepers,
his birth and the birth of his sister
had put me on earth a second time,
with the duty this time to protect them
and to help them to love themselves,

and yet here I was, locked in solidarity
with these adults against my own child,
hee-hawing away, without once wondering
if we weren't, underneath, all of us, striking back,
too late, at our parents for humiliating us.

I gulped down my laughter and held him and
apologized and commiserated and explained and then
things were right again, but to this day it remains
loose, this face, seat of superior smiles,
on the bones, from that hard yanking.

Shall I publish this anecdote from the past
and risk embarrassing him? I like it
that he fought back, but what's the good,
now he's thirty-six, in telling the tale
of his mortification when he was four?

Let him decide—I'll give him three choices.
He can scratch his slapdash checkmark,
whose rakish hook reminds me
of his old high-school hockey stick,
in whichever box applies:

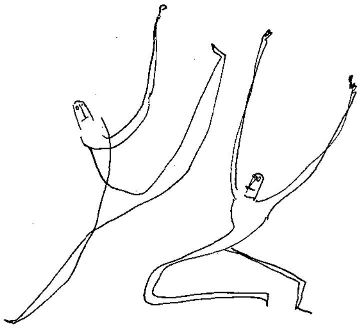
☐ *Tear it up.* ☐ *Don't publish it but give me a copy.*
☐ *O.K., publish it on the chance that*
somewhere someone survives
of those said to die miserably every day
for lack of the small clarifications sometimes found in poems.

—*Galway Kinnell*

Adaptation in 2040? Adaptation in 2060? Because the way the models project this, as global warming gets going, once you've adapted to one decade you're going to have to change everything the next decade.

"We may say that we're more technologically able than earlier societies. But one thing about climate change is it's potentially geopolitically destabilizing. And we're not only more technologically able; we're more technologically able destructively as well. I think it's impossible to predict what will happen. I guess—though I won't be around to see it—I wouldn't be shocked to find out that by 2100 most things were destroyed." He paused. "That's sort of an extreme view."

On the other side of the Hudson River and slightly to the north of GISS, the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory occupies what was once a weekend estate in the town of Palisades, New York. The observatory is an outpost of Columbia University, and it houses, among its collections of natural artifacts, the world's largest assembly of ocean-sediment cores—more than thirteen thousand in all. The cores are kept in steel compartments that look like drawers from a filing cabinet, only longer and much skinnier. Some of the cores are chalky, some are clayey, and some are made up almost entirely of gravel. All can be coaxed to yield up—in one way or another—information about past climates.



Peter deMenocal is a paleoclimatologist who has worked at Lamont-Doherty for fifteen years. He is an expert on ocean cores, and also on the climate of the Pliocene, which lasted from roughly five million to two million years ago. Around two and a half million years ago, the earth, which had been warm and relatively ice-free, started to cool down until it entered an era—the Pleistocene—of recurring glaciations. DeMenocal has argued that this transition was a key event in human evolution: right around the time that it occurred, at least two types of hominids—one of which would eventually give rise to us—branched off from a single ancestral line. Until quite recently, paleoclimatologists like deMenocal rarely bothered with anything much closer to the present day; the current interglacial—the Holocene—which began some ten thousand years ago, was believed to be, climatically speaking, too stable to warrant much study. In the mid-nineties, though, deMenocal, motivated by a growing concern over global warming—and a concomitant shift in government research funds—decided to look in detail at some Holocene cores. What he learned, as he put it to me when I visited him at Lamont-Doherty last fall, was "less boring than we had thought."

One way to extract climate data from ocean sediments is to examine the remains of what lived or, perhaps more pertinently, what died and was buried there. The oceans are rich with microscopic creatures known as foraminifera. There are about thirty planktonic species in all, and each thrives at a different temperature, so that by counting a species' prevalence in a given sample it is possible to estimate the ocean temperatures at the time the sediment was formed. When deMenocal used this technique to analyze cores that had been collected off the coast of Mauritania, he found that they contained evidence of recurring cool periods; every fifteen hundred years or so, water temperatures dropped for a few centuries before climbing back up again. (The most recent cool period corresponds to the Little Ice Age, which ended about a century and a half ago.) Also, perhaps even more significant, the cores showed profound changes in precipitation. Until about six thousand years ago, northern Africa was relatively wet—dotted with small lakes. Then it became dry, as it is today. DeMenocal traced the shift to periodic variations in the earth's orbit, which, in a generic sense, are the same forces that trigger ice ages. But orbital changes occur gradually, over thousands of years, and northern Africa appears to have switched from wet to dry all of a sudden. Although no one knows exactly how this happened, it seems, like so many climate events, to have been a function of feedbacks—the less rain the continent got, the less vegetation there was to retain water, and so on until, finally, the system just flipped. The process provides yet more evidence of how a very small forcing sustained over time can produce dramatic results.

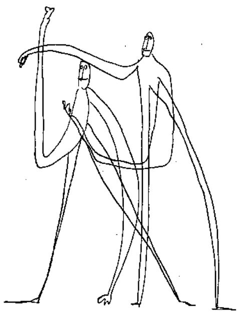
"We were kind of surprised by what we found," deMenocal told me about his work on the supposedly stable Holocene. "Actually, more than surprised. It was one of these things where, you know, in life you take certain things for granted, like your neighbor's not going to be an axe murderer. And then you discover your neighbor *is* an axe murderer."

Not long after deMenocal began to think about the Holocene, a brief mention of his work on the climate of Africa appeared in a book produced by *National Geographic*. On the facing page, there was a piece on Harvey Weiss and his work at Tell Leilan. DeMenocal vividly remembers his reaction. "I thought, Holy cow, that's just amazing!" he told me. "It was one of these cases where I lost sleep that night, I just thought it was such a cool idea."

DeMenocal also recalls his subsequent dismay when he went to learn more. "It struck me that they were calling on this climate-change argument, and I wondered how come I didn't know about it," he said. He looked at the *Science* paper in which Weiss had originally laid out his theory. "First of all, I scanned the list of authors and there was no paleoclimatologist on there," deMenocal said. "So then I started reading through the paper and there basically was no paleoclimatology in it." (The main piece of evidence Weiss adduced for a drought was that Tell Leilan had filled with dust.) The more deMenocal thought about it, the more unconvincing he found the data, on the one hand, and the more compelling he found the underlying idea, on the other. "I just couldn't leave it alone," he told me. In the summer of 1995, he went with Weiss to Syria to visit Tell Leilan. Subsequently, he decided to do his own study to prove—or disprove—Weiss's theory.

Instead of looking in, or even near, the ruined city, deMenocal focussed on the Gulf of Oman, nearly a thousand miles downwind. Dust from the Mesopotamian floodplains, just north of Tell Leilan, contains heavy concentrations of the mineral dolomite, and since arid soil produces more wind-borne dust, deMenocal figured that if there had been a drought of any magnitude it would show up in gulf sediments. "In a wet period, you'd be getting none or very, very low amounts of dolomite, and during a dry period you'd be getting a lot," he explained. He and a graduate student named Heidi Cullen developed a highly sensitive test to detect dolomite, and then Cullen assayed, centimetre by centimetre, a sediment core that had been extracted near where the Gulf of Oman meets the Arabian Sea.

"She started going up through the core," DeMenocal told me. "It was like nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. Then one day, I think it was a Friday afternoon, she goes, 'Oh, my God.' It was really classic." DeMenocal had thought that the dolomite level, if it were elevated at all, would be modestly higher; instead, it went up by four hundred per cent. Still, he wasn't satisfied. He decided to have the core re-analyzed using a different marker: the ratio of strontium 86 and strontium 87 isotopes. The same spike showed up. When deMenocal had the core carbon-dated, it turned out that the spike lined up exactly with the period of Tell Leilan's abandonment.



Tell Leilan was never an easy place to live. Much like, say, western Kansas today, the Khabur plains received enough annual rainfall—about seventeen inches—to support cereal crops, but not enough to grow much else. "Year-to-year variations were a real threat, and so they obviously needed to have grain storage and to have ways to buffer themselves," deMenocal observed. "One generation would tell the next, 'Look, there are these things that happen that you've got to be prepared for.' And they were good at that. They could manage that. They were there for hundreds of years."

He went on, "The thing they couldn't prepare for was the same thing that we won't prepare for, because in their case they didn't know about it and because in our case the political system can't listen to it. And that is that the climate system has much greater things in store for us than we think."

Shortly before Christmas, Harvey Weiss gave a lunchtime lecture at Yale's Institute for Biospheric Studies. The title was "What Happened in the Holocene," which, as Weiss explained, was an allusion to a famous archeology text by V. Gordon Childe, entitled "What Happened in History." The talk brought together archeological and paleoclimatic records from the Near East over the last ten thousand years.

Weiss, who is sixty years old, has thinning gray hair, wire-rimmed glasses, and an excitable manner. He had prepared for the audience—mostly Yale professors and graduate students—a handout with a time line of Mesopotamian history. Key cultural events appeared in black ink, key climatological ones in red. The two alternated in a rhythmic cycle of disaster and innovation. Around 6200 B.C., a severe global cold snap—red ink—produced aridity in the Near East. (The cause of the cold snap is believed to have been a catastrophic flood that emptied an enormous glacial lake—called Lake Agassiz—into the North Atlantic.) Right around the same time—black ink—farming villages in northern Mesopotamia were abandoned, while in central and southern Mesopotamia the art of irrigation was invented. Three thousand years later, there was another cold snap, after which settlements in northern Mesopotamia once again were deserted. The most recent red event, in 2200 B.C., was followed by the dissolution of the Old Kingdom in Egypt, the abandonment of villages in ancient Palestine, and the fall of Akkad. Toward the end of his talk, Weiss, using a PowerPoint program, displayed some photographs from the excavation at Tell Leilan. One showed

"Freedom's on the march everywhere but 114 Circle Drive."

the wall of a building—probably intended for administrative offices—that had been under construction when the rain stopped. The wall was made from blocks of basalt topped by rows of mud bricks. The bricks gave out abruptly, as if construction had ceased from one day to the next.

The monochromatic sort of history that most of us grew up with did not allow for events like the drought that destroyed Tell Leilan. Civilizations fell, we were taught, because of wars or barbarian invasions or political unrest. (Another famous text by Childe bears the exemplary title "Man Makes Himself.") Adding red to the time line points up the deep contingency of the whole enterprise. Civilization goes back, at the most, ten thousand years, even though, evolutionarily speaking, modern man has been around for at least ten times that long. The climate of the Holocene was not boring, but at least it was dull enough to allow people to sit still. It is only after the immense climatic shifts of the glacial epoch had run their course that writing and agriculture finally emerged.

Nowhere else does the archeological record go back so far or in such detail as in the Near East. But similar red-and-black chronologies can now be drawn up for many other parts of the world: the Indus Valley, where, some four thousand years ago, the Harappan civilization suffered a decline after a change in monsoon patterns; the Andes, where, fourteen hundred years ago, the Moche abandoned their cities in a period of diminished rainfall; and even the United States, where the arrival of the English colonists on Roanoke Island, in 1587, coincided with a severe regional drought. (By the time English ships returned to resupply the colonists, three years later, no one was left.) At the height of the Mayan civilization, population density was five hundred per square mile, higher than it is in most parts of the U. S. today. Two hundred years later, much of the territory occupied by the Mayans had been completely depopulated. You can argue that man through culture creates stability, or you can argue, just as plausibly, that stability is for culture an essential precondition.

After the lecture, I walked with Weiss back to his office, which is near the center of the Yale campus, in the Hall of Graduate Studies. This past year, Weiss decided to suspend excavation at Tell Leilan. The site lies only fifty miles from the Iraqi border, and, owing to the uncertainties of the war, it seemed like the wrong sort of place to bring graduate students. When I visited, Weiss had just returned from a trip to Damascus, where he had gone to pay the guards who watch over the site when he isn't there. While he was away from his office, its contents had been piled up in a corner by repairmen who had come to fix some pipes. Weiss considered the piles disconsolately, then unlocked a door at the back of the room.

The door led to a second room, much larger than the first. It was set up like a library, except that instead of books the shelves were stacked with hundreds of cardboard boxes. Each box contained fragments of broken pottery from Tell Leilan. Some were painted, others were incised with intricate designs, and still others were barely distinguishable from pebbles. Every fragment had been inscribed with a number, indicating its provenance.

I asked what he thought life in Tell Leilan had been like. Weiss told me that that was a "corny question," so I asked him about the city's abandonment. "Nothing allows you to go beyond the third or fourth year of a drought, and by the fifth or sixth year you're probably gone," he observed. "You've given up hope for the rain, which is exactly what they wrote in 'The Curse of Akkad.' " I asked to see something that might have been used in Tell Leilan's last days. Swearing softly, Weiss searched through the rows until he finally found one particular box. It held several potsherds that appeared to have come from identical bowls. They were made from a greenish-colored clay, had been thrown on a wheel, and had no decoration. Intact, the bowls had held about a litre, and Weiss explained that they had been used to mete out rations—probably wheat or barley—to the workers of Tell Leilan. He passed me one of the fragments. I held it in my hand for a moment and tried to imagine the last Akkadian who had touched it. Then I passed it back. ♦

(*This is the second part of a three-part article.*)

LETTER FROM LONDON

THE MASOCHISM CAMPAIGN

Say anything about Tony Blair. He can take it.

BY DAVID REMNICK

Not long before making a series of visits to No. 10 Downing Street, I was reading the novel that everyone in London seemed to be poring over in the cafés and on the benches in St. James's Park—Ian McEwan's "Saturday," which is set on February 15, 2003, the day of the worldwide antiwar demonstrations. The central character is a middle-aged neurosurgeon named Henry Perowne. He is prosperous, fortunate in his wife and two children, happy, yet haunted by the onset of middle age; and although he is not especially political, he is pained and ambivalent about Tony Blair's support of the American-led invasion of Iraq. At one point, Perowne recalls meeting Blair. As a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, he'd been invited to the opening of the Tate Modern, where he and his wife, Rosalind, were among four thousand guests. Perowne wanders into a huge gallery and suddenly finds himself next to Blair, who is, as ever, eager to shake hands, to forge a connection.

"I really admire the work you're doing," Blair says. "In fact, we've got two of your paintings hanging in Downing Street. Cherie and I adore them." Clearly, Blair has taken Perowne to be one of the Tate's artists, and, after thinking it through, Perowne decides on honesty.

"You're making a mistake," he says.

"And, and on that word, there passed through the Prime Minister's features for the briefest instant a look of sudden alarm, of fleeting self-doubt," McEwan writes. "A hairline fracture had appeared in the assurance of power."

To follow British politics these past weeks, to watch Blair campaign for a third term—Election Day is May 5th—is to witness a politician putting himself in the way of any audience, any camera, anyone who will have him. His aides call it "the masochism campaign." The punishment is daily and takes many forms. During a televised meet-the-voters session in Coventry, Blair's declaration that he had improved the National Health Service was answered by Mrs. Valerie Holsworth, who told him that she had so despaired of finding an available N.H.S. dentist that she'd used her husband's pliers to yank her own rotten teeth—four of them. As proof, she readily displayed her gums. Blair winced in sympathy. At a Downing Street press conference, a tabloid reporter reacted to the Government's proud announcement of a hike in the minimum wage by asking Blair, "Would you be willing to wipe someone's bottom for this 'higher' minimum wage?" And, at a lunchtime session at No. 10 with British journalists, I heard a reporter say that Blair had appeared on the cover of *Attitude*, a magazine much like *Out*, which led him to ask the Prime Minister, "Are you a gay icon?" In every case, one saw the "hairline fracture in the assurance of power," the Halloween rictus, a practiced yet futile attempt to mask embarrassment or anger with a smile that hopes to project sincerity, patience, and (the essential category of pollsters) likability.

The masochism campaign is a kind of political rope-a-dope, the idea being that through constant exposure to Blair's kindly endurance, his lucid, if canned, explanations, the electorate will eventually weary of its lingering anger and distrust—primarily over Blair's unwavering support of George W. Bush—and will come around to conceding that the Conservatives, under the forgettable Michael Howard, have little to offer but fear-mongering on issues like asylum-seeking immigrants from Asia and Eastern Europe, and that the left-leaning Liberal Democrats are still a marginal party in the House of Commons promoting, as one Blair aide airily put it, "the ideology of bicyclists."

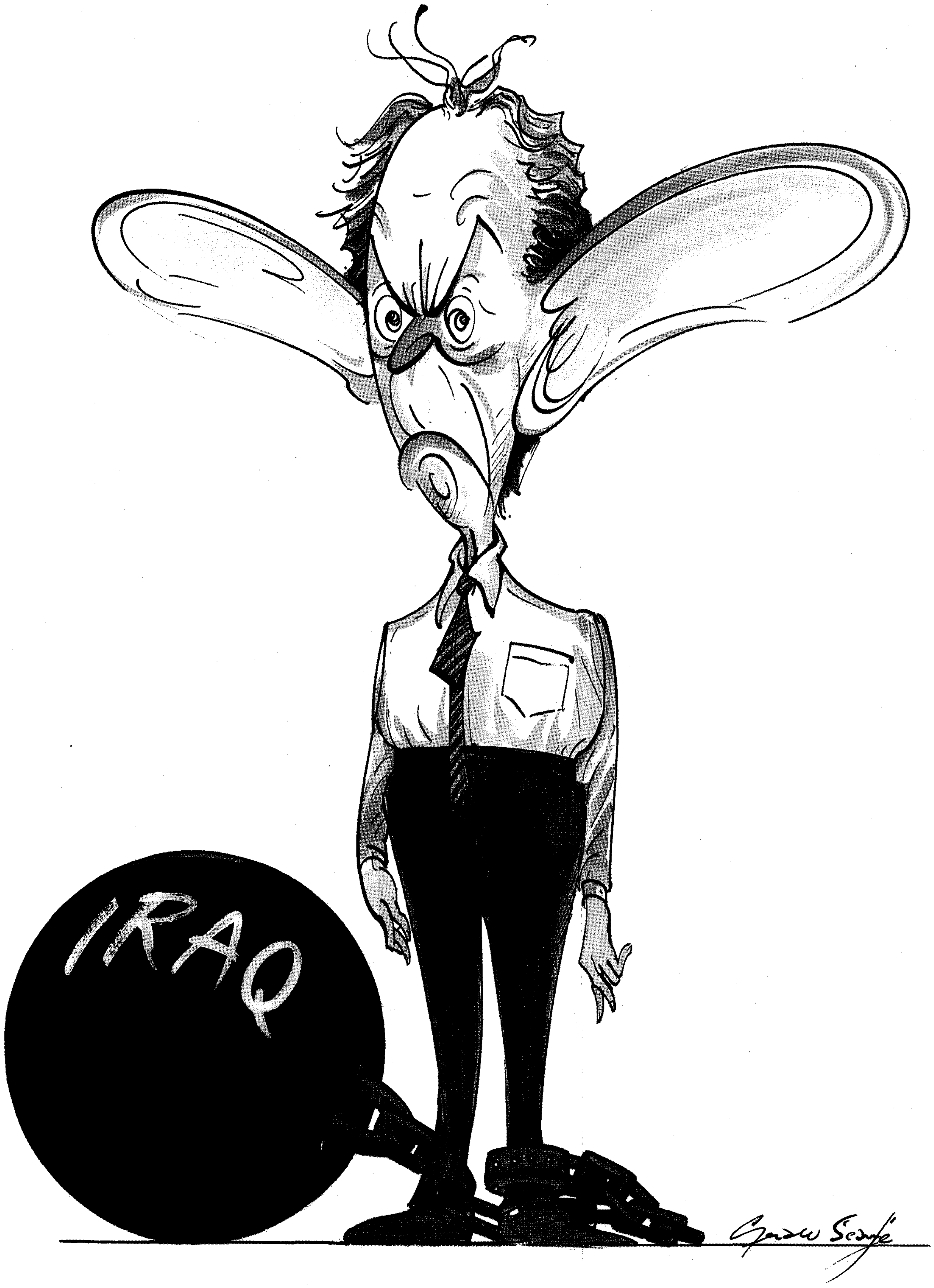
In a sense, after eight years of crisis and grating propinquity, Blair has to revive the notion of his own charm. When he came to power, in 1997, as the standard-bearer of New Labour, he ended eighteen years of Tory rule and the distinct possibility that Labour would never head a government again. Blair did not possess quite the glamour of a Kennedy, but, compared with his managerial predecessor, John Major, he was positively vibrant, promising a progressive revival as thorough as Margaret Thatcher's conservative revolution. He was just forty-three, the youngest Prime Minister since the Napoleonic Wars. His majority in the House of Commons was the biggest since 1935. He became the first Labour Party premier ever to last two consecutive terms, winning votes not just among the urban élites and the urban poor, the Labour base, but among traditional Tory voters in the suburbs of Middle England. Now, despite a rudderless opposition, Blair will be relieved if he wins a third term with a less gaudy majority in the Commons than he has enjoyed. His campaign's only anxiety is a sullen apathy among Labour voters. The Tories point to the 1970 campaign, when Harold Wilson's Labour Government held a decisive lead only to be dumped from office by the Tory Edward Heath.

The masochism campaign is a daily operation. One morning, I stood in one of the second-floor drawing rooms of No. 10 as a group of television technicians set up their cameras, microphones, and lights for a taping with Little Ant and Little Dec, two ten-year-old adorables who specialize in faux-naïf celebrity interviews for an ITV variety show called "Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway." Little Ant and Little Dec sat jammed together into one of Downing Street's better armchairs waiting for the Prime Minister. They wore little black suits and their hair was pomaded. Their names are Dylan McKenna-Redshaw and James Pallister, and they are the Mini-Mes of the show's oleaginous grownup stars, Ant and Dec.

"Boys! Sit up straight!"

This was the voice of Georgie

GERALD SCARFE



The Prime Minister's support for the Iraq war—and his friendship with George W. Bush—has taken a toll on his popularity.

Herford-Jones, the show's producer. Herford-Jones, who resembles the young Linda Evans, had complete command of her puppies. When she barked, they straightened in the chair, and when she raised a brow they commenced rehearsing the wiseacre questions that had been scripted for them. The idea was to be both cute and rude, a kids-say-the-darnedest-things routine. They'd interviewed the midfielder David Beckham, Posh Spice's husband. "You and your wife just had your third kid," one question went. "My dad says you must be at it like rabbits. What does he mean?" They asked Angelina Jolie, "How big is your mouth?" Bruce Willis was so offended by the prepubescent grilling that he walked off the set, earning himself a couple of jabs in the tabloids.

Finally, Blair appeared, wearing no jacket but a genuine smile.

"How ya doin', boys?" he said, settling into a chair opposite Little Ant and Little Dec.

Blair's press aides, David Hill and Hilary Coffman, stood out of camera range and looked eager.

"Seven, eight million people watch this Saturday nights," Hill whispered to me. "For this country, that's huge." Hill had said, repeatedly, that Blair had to "reconnect" with the British public, especially voters who rarely watched the news or read the papers. If some of Blair's natural liberal constituents were staying home to protest his fealty to Bush, he needed new, more forgiving voters. "Saturday Night Takeaway" was the perfect forum in which to show Blair as "accessible, clear, nice."

Little Ant and Little Dec were ready to begin.

The Prime Minister nodded distantly. Low clouds of preoccupation encased him. Not only were the latest polls too tight for absolute comfort; the Pope was on his deathbed and, in a few hours, Blair had a Cabinet meeting where he would face his saturnine Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown. The closest of comrades fifteen years ago, Blair and Brown have run the country in tandem for eight years yet, at times, barely speak. Brown, who had hoped to lead the Party himself, has always bridled at his sidecar position in the arrangement, and his aides regularly leak word of his particular resentments to the conflict-hungry press. For the duration of the campaign, and for the sake of party comity, Blair and Brown would have to behave rather like an angrily divorced couple who must come together on their daughter's wedding day; the price of a spat now could be Blair's election and Brown's ambitions.

The tape rolled. The questions began:

"You run the whole country. Have you always been that bossy?"

"When your children are cheeky, do you ever say, 'How dare you speak to the Prime Minister like that!'?"

"My dad says you've got to be mad to do your job. Are you mad?"

The biggest political story that week had been a campaign by the young television cook Jamie Oliver, "The Naked Chef," to improve school lunches, which are notoriously foul. Little Ant moved in.

"What were your school meals like?"

Before going up to St. John's College, Oxford, Blair attended Fettes, a posh boarding school in Scotland. In Britain, boarding-school food, with its rissoles fried in grease and its wan Brussels sprouts, is no better than the rest, but, still, Blair is rarely eager to remind anyone of Fettes and thus kept his answer vague.

"Have you actually tasted a Turkey Twizzler?" Ant persisted. Turkey Twizzlers, a fatty processed food, had never been on Blair's menu. Another dodge.

With each question, Blair parried in a pleasantly harrumph-ish sort of way, but it became increasingly clear that he had been only casually briefed. In any case, it was impossible to imagine an earlier Prime Minister—Gladstone, Asquith, Churchill, Eden, Macmillan, Thatcher—coping with the inquisitions of Little Ant and Little Dec. Informality was part of Blair's "American" style—"Call me Tony," he told everyone, and everyone did—but now the cost of informality was plain.

Then things got worse. After Blair mentioned that as a student he'd been in a rock-and-roll band called the Ugly Rumors, Little Dec said, "When my aunt makes a smell, she says, 'Oh, my, I think I started an ugly rumor.' Is that where the name comes from?"

Well, no, Blair said, it comes from a Grateful Dead album that—

"If you make an ugly smell, do people pretend not to notice because you is the Prime Minister?"

And then it came: the strained rictus, the hairline fracture . . .

Off-camera, Linda Evans beamed at her little darlings. She occasionally asked them to repeat a flubbed question and kept gesturing for them to sit up in their chair. Blair looked over at her, as if for a sign that this agony was about to end.

"Why does the Labour Party have flowers as its logo? Isn't that a bit . . . girlie?"

The grilling was over at last, but now there was an exchange of presents. One

"Who's your daddy corporation?"

of the boys picked up a shopping bag and handed over several gifts: a bouquet of cheap flowers, some crummy memorabilia from the show, a pair of panties and a pink boa for Blair's wife, Cherie.

"That's for Cherie? What can I say?"

"Say thank you," Little Dec said.

Blair looked over toward the cluster of aides. "I don't believe this!" he said, mock indignant. "I'm not used to interviews like this. I'll try to see who got me into this."

"Yesterday they did Ozzy Osbourne," the father of one of the boys told me.

"How much of this will they use?" Blair asked as he wearily rose from his chair.

"About half."

"I can think of some things to cut out," he said.

Linda Evans informed the Prime Minister that he had to film another scene. Blair had already devoted forty-odd minutes to the Little Ones and he rolled his eyes. And yet he obeyed. Linda Evans told him that the boys would sit on a couch next to a telephone and that he, Blair, would suddenly enter. "You come into the room and you say, 'Good morning, boys. Have you been looked after?' "

Blair nodded moodily, as if he had just received a stern rebuke from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We all moved to the next room for the shot. Suddenly, Cherie Blair arrived. Someone had put Little Ant and Little Dec on her schedule, too.

"Hi, guys!" Cherie said brightly.

"This is Little Ant and Little Dec," the Prime Minister said, in just about the same voice one might say, "These are the McCrary twins and they have come to kidnap the children and shoot the dog."

"You're not really called Little Ant and Little Dec, are you?" she said. "You're much cuter than the big ones."

"I was just asking them if they spent more time reading or playing on the PlayStation," Blair said.

"I still read loads," Cherie said. "You must read. It's really important. I love cuddling up in bed with a good book."

"Thank you, dear," the Prime Minister said. "That's what twenty-five years of married life gets you, boys."

Cherie was told that the pink boa was for her. She fingered it and tried to think of something clever to say. All she could manage was "Well! It's been lovely! But I have to go do something about the Olympics!" London is in the hunt to win the Summer Games in 2012. Then she beat it down a flight of stairs.

"Are you jealous of the Queen?" Little Ant asked Blair.

"No. She's the Queen and I'm not."

"Really?"

This was beginning to sound like outtakes from "Krapp's Last Tape."

"Well, she's Queen for a long time. Prime Ministers aren't," Blair said, as he waited for a cue to leave the room and reënter. "What do you want to do when you grow up?"

"Direct," Little Dec said.

At last, Linda Evans said, "Could I get you coming through the door?"

"This one?" Blair asked, pointing. She nodded. He left. He came back in, smiling. Beckett had now bowed to Feydeau.

"Hi, boys! Have you been looked after?"

Dec said, "A nice man called George Bush just called. He's bringing pizzas . . ."

"Whoa!" Linda Evans said, waving her arms. She didn't like the shot. "Um, could we do that once more?"

Blair squinted murderously.

"Right," he said, recovering. "So, I say . . ."

And then he went out the door once again.

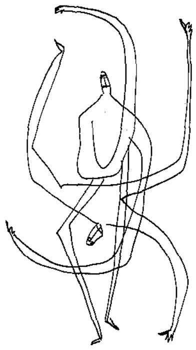
A few seconds later, he came back in. The tape was rolling.

"Hi, boys. Have you been looked after?"

"A nice man called George Bush just called. He's bringing pizzas."

Then Tony Blair sighed and said, "Is he bringing one for me?"

After all that, the Prime Minister required what White House schedulers call "a little bit of alone time." I was brought to a waiting room downstairs. Blair lives and works in what must surely be the least commodious headquarters of any leader of a major industrialized state. Downing Street is a small cul-de-sac off Whitehall, and No. 10 is a large, somewhat worn, seventeenth-century town house. (The Blairs and their four children, who range in age from four to twenty-one, live in an apartment above No. 11. The Browns are next door. There is a jungle gym in the back yard.) The Prime Minister does not even have an officially designated office. Margaret Thatcher used a room on the second floor. John Major read documents at the enormous table in the Cabinet Room. Blair occupies a room just outside the Cabinet Room known as "the den," which is just large enough for a couch, a desk, and two armchairs.



By the time Blair greeted me in the den, he seemed well over the depredations of Little Ant and Little Dec.

"It was a piece of fun, that's all," he said gamely, and yet, he went on, "it's always a battle, isn't it, between the modern world in which we live, in which people expect their leaders to be a lot more accessible . . . and the dignity of the office. And you've got to be careful that you don't compromise the one in the attempt to enter into the other."

There is a tendency for political criticism to be sharper among the chattering classes of London than in, say, the Midland suburbs and towns, where concern for foreign policy is dwarfed by issues like binge drinking and discipline in the schools. Nonetheless, it was remarkable how many people had turned on Blair. Even early in his first term, there were those who considered him unbearably pious, prone to empty idealism and windy intellectual pronouncements—a spinner, a glad-hander. As far back as 1997, the joke was that if you called the Downing Street switchboard after hours the answering machine would say, "Please leave a message after the high moral tone." He was Bambi, and Phony Tony. He wasn't especially smart, it was said, nothing like the Labour giants of an earlier generation: Denis Healey, Harold Wilson, Tony Crosland, Richard Crossman. At Oxford, he'd earned a second-class degree, and, well, doesn't *everyone* at Oxford get a second-class degree just for breathing? Blair's mentor, the late Roy Jenkins, a colossal figure in Parliament and the biographer of Churchill and Gladstone, echoed an old remark about F.D.R. when he told a writer for *The Spectator* that Blair had "a second-class mind" and "a first-class temperament." Unfortunately for Blair, most people seemed to remember only the former. He was an actor in school—he'd played Mark Antony, and

Captain Stanhope in "Journey's End"—and now he was capable of changing his rhetoric, even his accent, as the occasion warranted. Wasn't he just a British version of Bill Clinton with a more settled domestic arrangement? "Blair's like a very sweet pudding," one senior Tory M.P. told me. "The first mouthful is nice, but then it becomes nauseating—the easy emoting, the quivering chin . . ."

It was relentless. Perhaps only in England—the one country where, it is said, the people feel Schadenfreude toward themselves—could a Prime Minister with such promise, and, over time, real accomplishments, be whacked around so mercilessly.

After the war in Iraq, it was something else, more serious. Blair and his team were roundly blamed for "sexing up" an intelligence dossier that had been compiled on Iraq and for presenting conjecture on weapons of mass destruction as incontrovertible fact. Worse, Blair was seen as the "poodle" of Bush and the Pentagon neoconservatives, ignoring domestic opinion and the ambiguity of the intelligence estimates simply to rush into the arms of the American President. So now he was Tony Bliar. And Tony Blur. And the Right Honourable Member for Texas North. Last year, a small group of members of the House of Commons undertook what was, in effect, an impeachment initiative against Blair, with a motion called "Conduct of the Prime Minister in relation to the war against Iraq." If successful, it would be the first impeachment since the proceedings brought against Lord Melville, the First Lord of the Admiralty, in 1806, for embezzlement. Some of Blair's own diplomats thought that he had fudged the case on Iraq. One of his former First Secretaries at the United Nations, Carne Ross, told the BBC, "I personally don't trust him, no. . . . I'm afraid the government did not tell the whole truth about the alleged threat that Iraq posed. That's why I think it's a tawdry story." The rhetoric of his opponents could be unhinged. In the *Guardian,* once the newspaper of Blair's electoral base, Harold Pinter was quoted as saying, "Blair sees himself as a representative of moral rectitude. He is a mass murderer."

One afternoon, I met with Peter Kilfoyle, a Labour traditionalist in the Commons—"Not Old Labour," he insisted. "Vintage Labour"—at the Pugin Room, one of the many tea rooms inside Westminster. Kilfoyle represents a lower-income constituency in Liverpool. He had been such an early enthusiast among the Party's Old Guard that he'd earned a spot as a minister. He resigned in 2000.

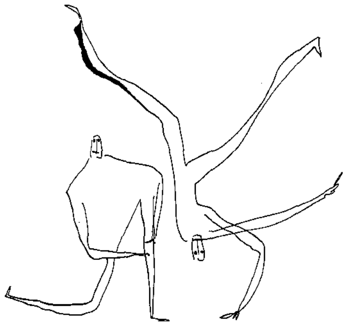
Kilfoyle represents what one journalist called the "flat-cap and pass-the-fish-and-chips" wing of the Party, and, in the end, sounding much like some of Clinton's critics in the Democratic Party, he found Blair to be a trimmer, insensitive to the poor, and inauthentic. "I once took him to a football match," Kilfoyle said. "He showed up in a dark suit and a polo sweater. I said, 'Tony, what the hell? You look like an Apache dancer!' He called Peter Mandelson"—one of Blair's closest advisers at the time—"to ask what he thought. He needed reassurance on how to play the part.

"He's lost his way completely," Kilfoyle continued. "He's trying to re-create the Labour Party, and he's trying to recast it in his own image. The Labour Party was an ideological party and now it's a cult of personality." The Pugin Room was crowded, loud, and smoky. Kilfoyle lit up his fifth Silk Cut of the hour and said, "Look, we all mobilized behind Tony Blair after eighteen years of opposition. Those around him treat him like Chauncey Gardiner in 'Being There.'. . . The best government was postwar Clement Attlee, who really changed this country: with welfare benefits, the health service, massive renewal programs. This Government has just flitted around the edges."

When I asked Kilfoyle if he would support Blair this time around, he smiled and said only, "No comment."

"I'm a critical friend," he said. "If your friend is pissed and says, 'Give me the keys, I'll drive,' you can't say O.K."

It really is remarkable how unwilling Blair's antagonists—whether Tory or Labour—are to give him credit for what's gone right in the past eight years: the lowest rate of inflation since the nineteen-fifties; a sharp decline in unemployment; sustained economic growth for every year in office; a historic breakthrough in the Northern Ireland dispute, leading to the 1998 Good Friday agreement and a near-cessation of violence on all sides; the establishment of a parliament in Scotland, an assembly in Wales, and a mayoralty in London; an improvement in, or, at least, an end to the deterioration of, public services; an increase in the number of doctors, nurses, and dentists (sorry, Mrs. Holsworth!) and a reduction in the waiting period for surgery. Perhaps the most significant of Blair's achievements was to lead the rescue of the Labour Party, which, in the Thatcher-Major years, had seemed destined for marginality as the English working class declined.



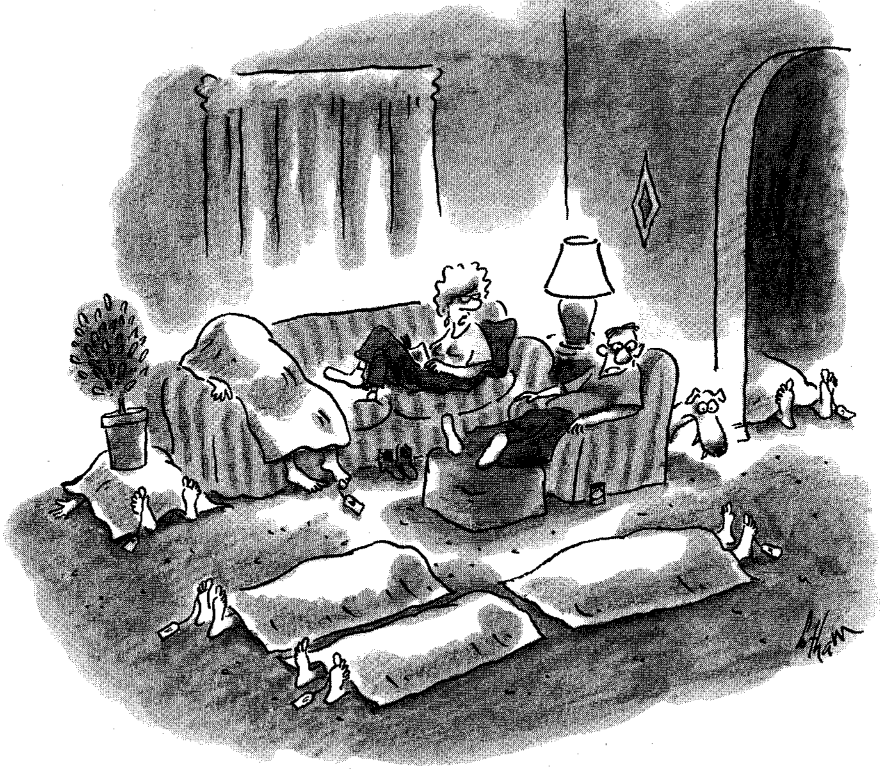
Blair risked everything in his decision to support Bush, and, when his case for war turned out to be unfounded, he lost the confidence and trust of much of the population. He will almost certainly win May 5th, but will he win convincingly enough to rule? Or will he suddenly be afloat, a lame duck paddling in the wake of Gordon Brown? Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong and an avatar of the British political establishment, said, "Never, after eight years, can it be glad, confident morning again. The young leader would look shop-soiled even without Iraq. But Iraq showed the gap between the image and the reality. . . . The real question to be asked about Blair is whether he sacrificed the objective with which he entered office—of making Britain comfortable in Europe—and sacrificed it to President Bush."

The debate over Blair and Iraq centers on two vexed and related subjects: the nature of the Prime Minister's core convictions and the efficacy of the "special relationship" between the United States and Britain.

Two and a half years ago, as Blair made plain that he would be America's strongest political and military ally, Roy Jenkins rose in the House of Lords, and, like Mark Antony in his funeral oration, began with tribute:

> I have a high regard for the Prime Minister. I have been repelled by attempts to portray him as a vacuous man with an artificial smile and no convictions. I am reminded of similar attempts by a frustrated Right to suggest that Gladstone was mad, Asquith was corrupt,

and Attlee was negligible. My view is that the Prime Minister, far from lacking conviction, has almost too much, particularly when dealing with the world beyond Britain. He is a little Manichean for my perhaps now jaded taste, seeing matters in stark terms of good and evil, black and white, contending with each other, and with a consequent belief that if evil is cast down good will inevitably follow. I am more inclined to see the world and the regimes in it in varying shades of gray.



"Using our house as a makeshift morgue is going to make it harder to sell."

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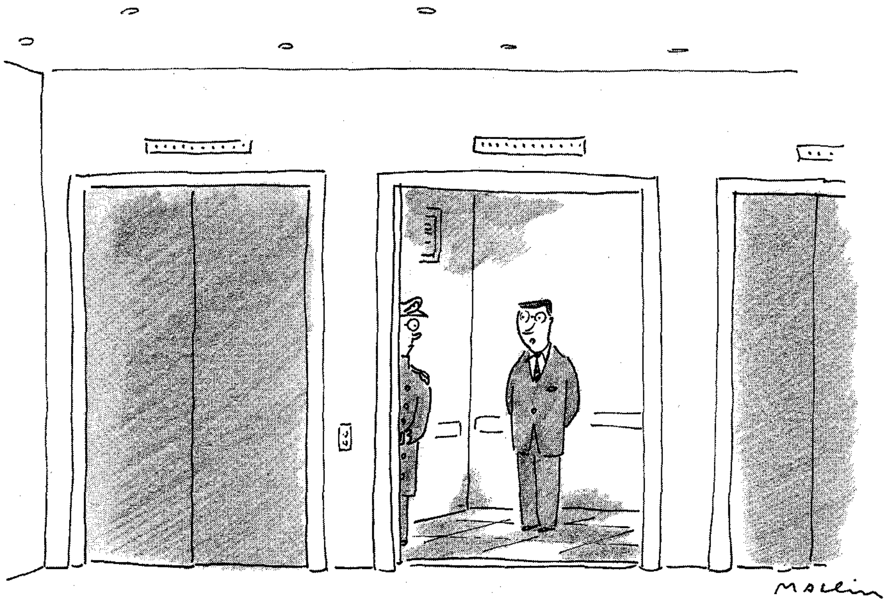
Although it was left unsaid in which particular shades of gray Roy Jenkins saw the Iraqi Baathists, he was undoubtedly right to see a moralist in his protégé. When Blair was at Oxford, in the early seventies, he impressed no one as a budding politico; he was not an activist, nor did he join the Oxford Union or any political groups—not even the student Labour Party. (In fact, his father was a Tory who revered Margaret Thatcher.) He read law, but he also had time for history and political theory, particularly the works of Christian socialists like R. H. Tawney, and, through an older friend at Oxford, an Australian-born vicar named Peter Thomson, he came to read the work of John Macmurray, a Scottish philosopher whose left-of-center Christian thought—a disdain for raw individualism, a yearning for solidarity without collectivization—anticipates the work of some of the American communitarians, as John Rentoul, one of Blair's biographers, writes. Like Blair himself a quarter century later, Macmurray was a philosophical triangulator, rejecting the prescriptive designs of socialism yet accepting its softer Sermon on the Mount generalities. "If you really want to understand what I'm all about," Blair once said, "you have to take a look at a guy called John Macmurray. It's all there."

When Blair was at Oxford, religious observance in England was already in decline, and yet he became observant and was eventually confirmed in the Anglican Church. As a young barrister, he married a colleague, Cherie Booth, who had been reared in the Labour Party and the Catholic Church. Blair often took Communion at Cherie's church, in Islington, in North London, until, in 1996, Cardinal Basil Hume wrote to him and asked that he, as an Anglican with sufficient access to Anglican churches, desist. Blair wrote back obliging the Cardinal, but, with a drop of acid in his pen, added, "I wonder what Jesus would have made of it."

As a Labour Party activist and then as an M.P. from the constituency of Sedgefield, Blair continued speaking about politics in moralistic terms. He was not at all rooted in the socialist, Labour vocabulary of Michael Foot and Tony Benn, following instead the Victorian path of such Liberal Party lights as Gladstone, Asquith, and Lloyd George. He did not, like Gladstone, wander the night streets of London looking to redeem the souls of prostitutes, but he did write with the starch of a parson invoking the awfulness of moral relativism. "Christianity is a very tough religion," he wrote. "It is judgmental. There is right and wrong. There is good and bad."

Blair attends church nearly every Sunday and is said to read the Bible daily (he has even said that he's read the Koran three times, including once when he was on vacation in Portugal), yet he learned over time to avoid mentioning religion in a political context. Statements like "Jesus was a modernizer"—which sounded to some as if the leader of New Labour had brought the Son of God into his fold—caused him enormous grief. In contrast to the United States, where it is nearly a requirement for high office to advertise belief, only seven per cent of the British population attends church regularly, and displays of public piety are scorned as sanctimonious. In 2003, Blair drafted his speech to the nation on Iraq, closing with a solemn "God bless you." His aides, a fairly godless lot, replaced the offending phrase with a simple "Thank you." But the staff cannot undo the image. The satirical magazine *Private Eye* still calls Blair "the Vicar of St. Albion," and the television interviewers Jeremy Paxman and David Frost have both tried to get a rise out of him by asking if he prayed with George Bush—an idea sure to unnerve many Britons. In one of our interviews, I tried to ask Blair about his religious background, and, predictably, he would not answer. "It leads to all sorts of highways and byways having nothing to do with politics," he said. "I learned my lesson when I actually gave an interview about religion and I was asked the question three times: 'Are you saying that if you are a Christian you have to vote Labour?' Each time, I said no, and the headline was something like 'If You're a Christian, You Have to Vote Labour, Says Blair.' The fact is, you never,



"Neither up nor down. I'm good here."

• •

ever, ever, in our politics, get into this argument and get out of it without people misconstruing it."

Blair saves his high principles for large occasions. Faced with humanitarian crises in the Balkans and in Sierra Leone, he began to invoke his nineteenth-century predecessors and to make a moral case for military action. On a trip to Bulgaria in 1999, he talked about Gladstone's campaign in the eighteen-seventies to bring attention to atrocities committed there by the Turks. "Today, we face the same questions that confronted Gladstone over one hundred and twenty years ago," he said. "Does one nation or people have the right to impose its will on another? Is there ever a justification for a policy based on the ethnic supremacy of one ethnic group? Can the outside world simply stand by when a rogue state brutally abuses the basic rights of those it governs? Gladstone's answer in 1876 was clear. And so is mine today."

In many ways, Thatcher had prepared the way for New Labour. Not only had she presided over the privatization of major utilities and the contraction of failing industries such as coal and steel; she also showed how a Prime Minister could answer Dean Acheson's postwar challenge when he said that Britain "has lost an empire and has not yet found a role." Like Harold Macmillan before her, Thatcher saw Britain's role as America's closest ally—British Athens playing wise man to the Roman-American superpower.

During the Second World War, the choice, rooted in national interest, had been clear. Churchill told de Gaulle, "Each time I have to choose between you and Roosevelt, I shall always choose Roosevelt." Afterward, Britain wavered between contradictory impulses, between its European allies and its Atlantic alliance. In 1956, during the Suez crisis, when Britain, France, and Israel colluded to seize the canal from Egypt, Anthony Eden acted without Washington's support—a miscalculation that provoked President Eisenhower to unprecedented anger. Britain was forced to withdraw from the canal, and the crisis left the country with a warning: that it should never again ignore America's interest or defy Washington. During the Vietnam War, however, Harold Wilson turned down Lyndon Johnson's request to send troops to Southeast Asia. Then, in the eighties and early nineties, the trend shifted once more. Thatcher's embrace of Ronald Reagan was absolute, a Tory-Republican version of the Athens-Rome model; and, after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Thatcher bolstered George H. W. Bush's confidence in the run-up to the Gulf War, telling him, "This is no time to go wobbly."

In the late nineties, when the Europeans and the Clinton Administration were slow to act in Kosovo, Blair repeatedly urged the West to move more forcefully. His remonstrations helped bring on the first major deployment of NATO troops since the pact was signed, a half century earlier. The action in Kosovo raised new questions about the conduct of foreign policy, particularly the use of force against sovereign states that had not attacked a neighbor. In 1879, when Gladstone was facing similar questions about humanitarian intervention, he made the Victorian moralist's case:

> Remember the rights of the savage, as we call him. Remember that the happiness of his humble home, remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan, among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own.

If he was right about being "morally forced" toward intervention, Gladstone wrote in his diary, then he could consider his work in politics the "great and high election of God."

In 1999, Blair led an England that would brook no mention of the Almighty in politics and had long ago lost the capacities of an imperial power; nevertheless, he was prepared to urge on the world—the new "interdependent world," as he said constantly—an end to Realpolitik and the revival of a morally based interventionism. Blair wrote a speech entitled "Doctrine of the International Community," which he delivered at the Economic Club of Chicago. The modern world, Blair said, could no longer avoid intervening in the sort of crises that it had seen in Bosnia and Rwanda. He laid out five criteria for action:

> First, are we sure of our case? War is an imperfect instrument for righting humanitarian distress; but armed force is sometimes the only means of dealing with dictators. Second, have we exhausted all diplomatic options? We should always give peace every chance as we have in the case of Kosovo. Third, on the basis of a practical assessment of the situation, are there military operations we can sensibly and prudently undertake? Fourth, are we prepared for the long term? In the past, we talked too much of exit strategies. But, having made a commitment, we cannot simply walk away once the fight is over; better to stay with moderate numbers of troops than return for repeat performances with large numbers. And, finally, do we have national interests involved? The mass expulsion of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo demanded the notice of the rest of the world. But it does make a difference that this is taking place in such a combustible part of Europe.

During the 2000 U.S. election campaign, Blair's circle was fairly indiscreet in betraying its hope that Al Gore would defeat George Bush. The Clinton-Blair relationship had been one of like-minded brothers (with Clinton in the role of the wise, if erratic, older brother), and Blair's lieutenants, including his chief of staff, Jonathan Powell, had learned many of their campaign techniques and media gambits by observing James Carville, George Stephanopoulos, and Paul Begala in Clinton's first campaign, in 1992. Together, they promoted a fuzzy "third way"—liberal on social issues such as abortion, the environment, and race, centrist on economic issues, such as welfare and deficit spending, and increasingly interventionist abroad.

Initially, there seemed little chance that a Bush foreign policy would, in any way, resemble the tenets laid out in Blair's Chicago speech. In 2000, Condoleezza Rice published an article in *Foreign Affairs*, "Promoting the National Interest," which was Kissingerian in its emphasis on national interests and its disdain for "humanitarian intervention" and nation-building. And yet the first piece of advice that Clinton gave Blair after Bush, in effect, was declared President by the Supreme Court was distinctly nonpartisan. "Be his friend," Clinton told Blair at Chequers, the Prime Minister's weekend retreat. "Be his best friend. Be the guy he turns to."

After Blair held his first serious meeting with Bush, at Camp David in February, 2001, he told an aide that Bush was "strong, straightforward, with an underlying seriousness. You know where you are with him. I like him." As Bush said at their press conference, "He put the charm offensive on me." Asked whether they shared some interests, Bush cracked, "Well, we both use Colgate toothpaste."

One morning, Blair and his entourage set off to campaign in the town of Gravesend, east of London. The ostensible aim was to promote the development of industries and infrastructure along the banks of the Thames, but the real reason was to reach the swing votes of the county of Kent. Blair got into the back seat of his car—a bottle-green Jaguar Sovereign—and, along with his press aides, David Hill and Hilary Coffman, and some other assistants, I climbed into a van. After a breakneck, bendy ride to Canary Wharf, we boarded a kind of *bateau mouche* and embarked on an hour-long journey on the river. All along the way, Blair gave a string of interviews, careful always to repeat key facts about the multibillion-dollar Thames Gateway development project. He repeated the same phrases—"biggest brownfield project in Western Europe," "concern for the environmental questions," etc.—with precision. He had mastered the briefing book.

David Hill stood off to the side and, with an ironic glint of admiration, watched his man at work in front of the cameras and tape recorders.

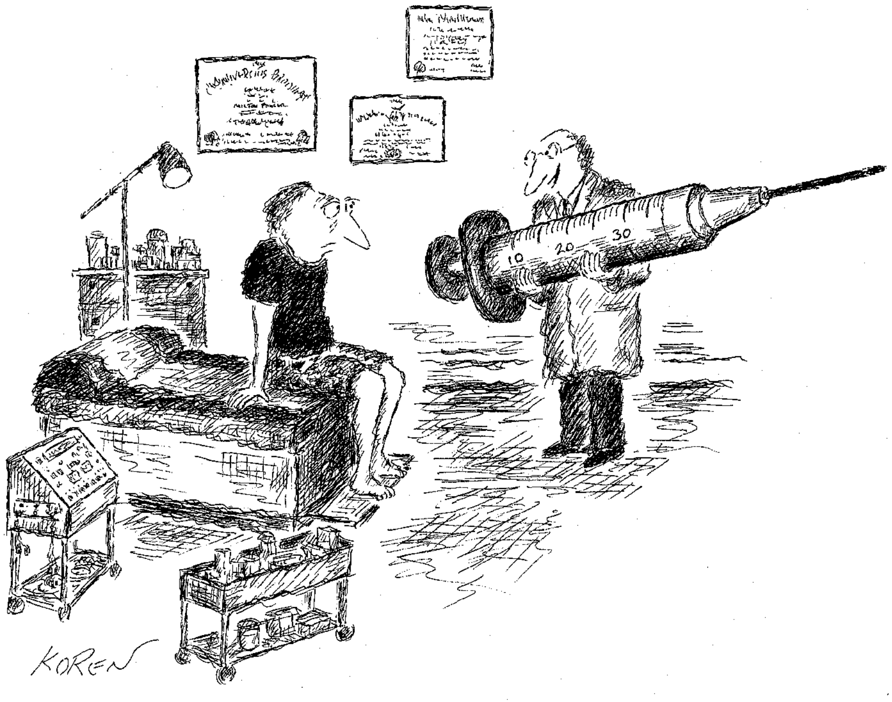
"You familiarize him, then you wind him up and let him go," he said.

The Blair team disembarked at Gravesend, did a public event on the pier with local pols and businesspeople about the development program, took a walkabout along "the historic High Street" (snap, snap, sound bite, sound bite), and then we hustled back to the waiting vans. In the rush, we almost lost track of Blair's Jaguar.

"Do you remember that episode of 'The West Wing' when Josh and Toby miss the motorcade and they're left behind in Indiana?" Hilary Coffman said. "We can relate."

A couple of minutes later, we arrived at a train that would take us from Gravesend back to Charing Cross Station, very close to Downing Street. There was no special train, not even a reserved car; the Blair crowd remarked on "how non-White House" it all was. Blair took a seat near a window and a few aides squished in next to him, including John Prescott, Blair's deputy P.M. Prescott, who comes from a family of miners, railwaymen, and union officials, attended Ruskin College, Oxford, on scholarship in his late twenties; as a young man, he worked as a steward on a cruise ship, and when he won a seat in the Commons Tory M.P.s like the toff Nicholas Soames used to shout at him, "A whiskey-and-soda for me, Giovanni! And a gin-and-tonic for my friend!" Prescott has a meaty, Old Labour face; he is tough and is a skillful Party enforcer. Once, when Blair angered him, he called him a "fucking Jesus Christ." One of Prescott's main tasks is to serve as arbiter of the dysfunctional partnership between Blair and Gordon Brown. As the train rolled along, I could hear Hill quietly briefing Blair on some upcoming events, at one point saying, "And the message is . . ." Blair took notes on a white legal pad. As the train picked up more passengers, he cheerfully told his security guards to let some in to fill the few empty seats in our part of the car. "As opposed to the right wing, we need all positive messages," Hill was saying. "Clear . . . refined message . . . forward . . ."

The commuters seemed underwhelmed to be in the presence of their Prime Minister. A man carrying the *Daily Telegraph* sat down, glanced once at Blair, opened his paper, and never



"This will buy you four months."

stopped reading. A little girl asked her mother, "Mummy, is that Tony Blair?" Sensing an interest, Blair invited her to come over and take a picture with her cell-phone camera. The mother, an Italian immigrant, told Blair that Silvio Berlusconi would never take such a train.

"I imagine not," Blair said.

For much of the hour-long trip into town, I was able to sit near Blair and ask him about Iraq. From almost the day he took office, Blair had been telling visitors to No. 10 that he was appalled by the intelligence reports he was reading on Saddam's intentions and his weapons programs. "I don't understand why the French and others don't understand this," he said in 1997 to Paddy Ashdown, then the leader of the Liberal Democrats. "We cannot let him get away with it."

The Al Qaeda attacks in New York and Washington marked the end of the Bush Administration's hope of running the inward-looking foreign policy envisioned in Rice's *Foreign Affairs* article. "We are all internationalists now," Blair had said in Chicago, and, as Clinton had advised, Blair quickly became Bush's most steadfast ally, signing on for the military efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. No other country provided nearly as many troops for the U.S.-led incursions. I asked Blair if he thought the United States could have gone to war in Iraq without Britain, which had given the invasion at least the appearance of an international coalition.

"I don't know," Blair said. "I think the United States, in the end, would do whatever was necessary for its own security. But it was important that we did not leave this up to the United States alone. I also profoundly believe that September 11th was an attack on the free world, not on the United States. It was an attack on America because America is the leading power of the free world. If America hadn't been, and Britain was, it would have been an attack on Britain. Let's not be daft about this. This alliance with America has stood my country in good stead."

Part of Blair's problem is that despite his differences with the Administration over everything from the Kyoto environmental accord to foreign aid, to say nothing of Labour's far more liberal domestic policies, much of the British public now sees his brand of interventionism as indistinguishable from the neoconservatism of the White House "Vulcans." And yet Blair seemed not to mind.

"What I think is interesting is that people can come to the same position from different perspectives," he said. "The idea that our ultimate security lies in the spread of the values of democracy and freedom is an idea I feel very comfortable with as a progressive. Now, that doesn't mean you go and alter every regime in the world that doesn't correspond with those principles. But it does mean that where we have taken those steps to intervene you do have faith in the people—whether it's in Iraq or in Afghanistan or, indeed, in Palestine and the Lebanon—to decide their own future."

Is there in fact much difference between the American neoconservatives and Blair's liberal interventionism?

"I don't spend too much time trying to analyze that," he said. "I just say what I think is right in a situation. And in the end we had to take a decision on Saddam. You could have left him there or you could have removed him, and I thought it was better to remove him. . . . What used to be just a moral cause is now also a cause in our own self-interest, which is why the conservatives and the progressives can unite around it."

Sometimes, I said, it seems as if Blair has more admirers in the United States than at home.

"It's kind of people to be good about me in the United States, but right now I need that here," Blair said. "Iraq has been a very divisive issue. There's no point in disputing that. The most important thing now is to concentrate on the future, though, because it must be the case that in a battle between the Iraqi people—and it's now clear that the Iraqi people want democracy with all the guarantees and rights and freedoms that we take for granted—and a gang of terrorists and insurgents, it's pretty obvious whose side we should be on, even for those people who opposed the original conflict. I think there is a sense now of change spreading across the Middle East. Let's leave aside what the reasons for that are, but what's happening in the Lebanon, the announcement made by the President of Egypt about democratic elections, what's already happened in a country like Afghanistan is amazing after decades and decades of brutal repression.

"Sometimes these issues have to be judged on a long time scale and you have to accept that. I hope and believe that when people look back they will see this as something that brought about change, as something good not only for Iraq and the region but also for our country here."

In the months preceding the war, Blair repeatedly denounced the history and the nature of the Baathist dictatorship, but he built his case for war on a legalistic argument that Saddam had repeatedly defied U.N. resolutions on the possession and development of weapons of mass destruction. After the invasion, when no such weapons were found, Blair was attacked by politicians and public figures across the political spectrum—including in his own Cabinet—for selling the war on the basis of dubious intelligence. Two independent inquiries, the Hutton and Butler reports, cleared Blair of the charge that he had deliberately lied to the British people, but his credibility suffered immeasurably. What happened?

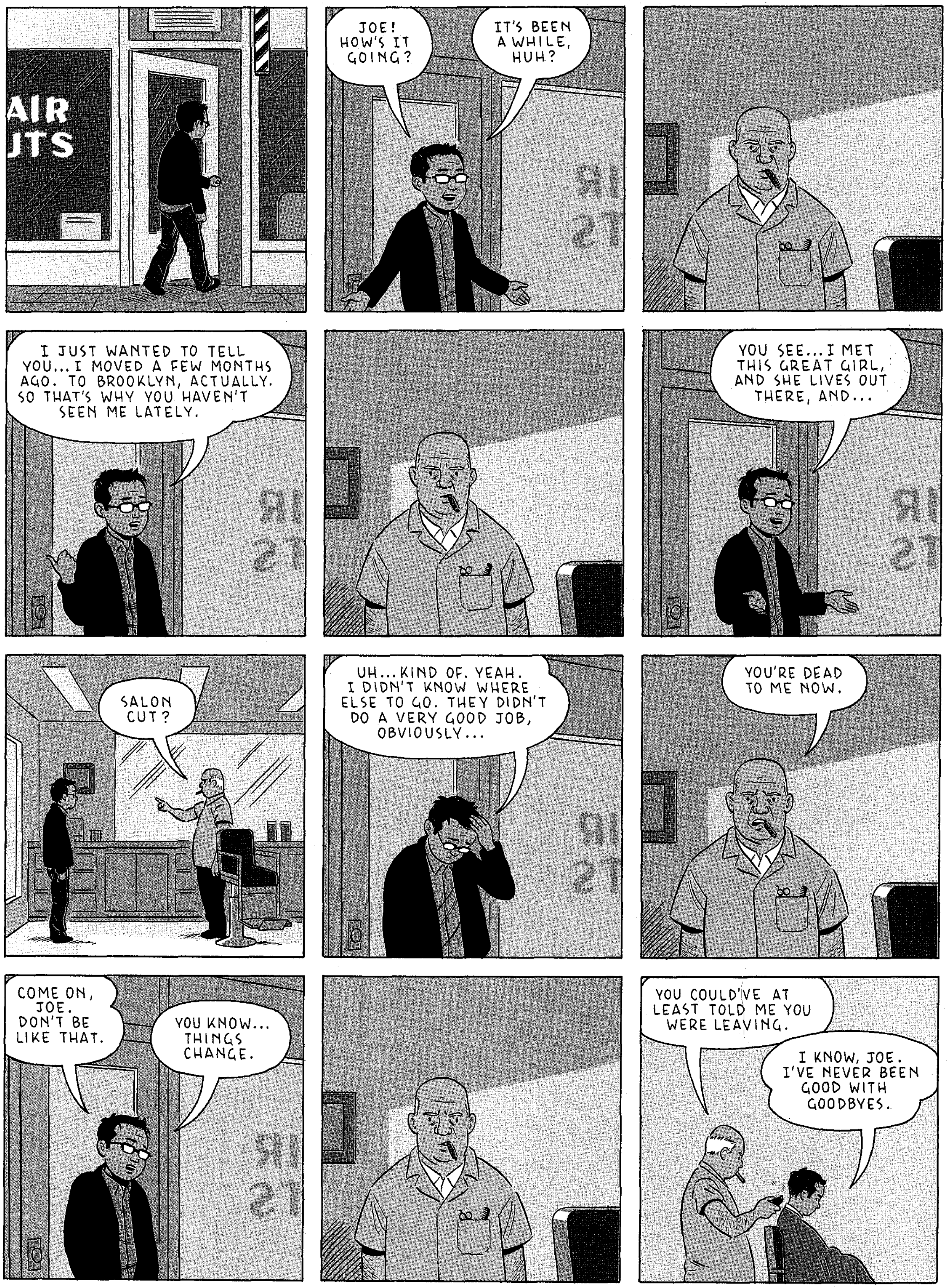
"I don't know," Blair said as the train rolled past the fenced-in back yards of suburban London. "The best that I can go on is what the Iraq Survey Group has found. Two things we do know: Saddam had W.M.D. and we haven't found them."

If he had known that Iraq's weapons program was so diminished, would he have gone to war based on Saddam's "intentions" to build more W.M.D. and on a human-rights case?

"The legal case for war rested on breaches of U.N. resolutions, but in February, 2003, I made a speech in Glasgow where I described the relevance of the nature of the regime," he said. "And the truth is, what the relevance of the nature of the regime did mean was that, one, obviously, any risk of W.M.D. in the hands of a regime such as this was greater than W.M.D. in the hands of a relatively benign regime. And, secondly, it meant that removing that regime was in itself not a bad thing to do. On the contrary, it's a good thing to do. Now, the legal case had to be based on the breaches of U.N. resolutions. That's the distinction, really. Again, contrary to the history of this, I think that, for all of us looking at this, the nature of the regime was a very important context in which that legal case was examined. In terms of the legal case, ah, it was about W.M.D."

Blair squirmed at this line of questioning. He could not, politically or oth-

MY EX-BARBER BY ADRIAN TOMINE


AIR
JTS
JOE! HOW'S IT GOING?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HUH?
I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU... I MOVED A FEW MONTHS AGO. TO BROOKLYN, ACTUALLY. SO THAT'S WHY YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ME LATELY.
YOU SEE... I MET THIS GREAT GIRL, AND SHE LIVES OUT THERE, AND...
SALON CUT?
UH... KIND OF. YEAH. I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO GO. THEY DIDN'T DO A VERY GOOD JOB, OBVIOUSLY...
YOU'RE DEAD TO ME NOW.
COME ON, JOE. DON'T BE LIKE THAT.
YOU KNOW... THINGS CHANGE.
YOU COULD'VE AT LEAST TOLD ME YOU WERE LEAVING.
I KNOW, JOE. I'VE NEVER BEEN GOOD WITH GOODBYES.

erwise, bring himself to say that the war was fought on a false premise. “So you are saying no, in other words?” I said.

“In the end, the issue was to do with breaches of U.N. resolutions with respect to W.M.D.,” Blair said. “A better way of putting this question is: ‘But for September 11th, is this a discussion we would have been having?’ And the answer to that is no. What September 11th did was change my thinking fundamentally. I then thought that all those worries I’d had about W.M.D. and proliferation were thrown into sharp relief and I thought, No, the one thing we must make absolutely sure of is that this nexus of repressive states, the development of W.M.D., the development of this type of virulent and extreme form of terrorism—you’ve got to put a stop to it. What does that mean? It means take the security measures that are necessary. It means sending a signal right across the world that from now on in if you develop this in the face of U.N. resolutions you’re going to face trouble. Now, that was the reason for taking on Iraq. It wasn’t because I suddenly thought Iraq was going to invade Britain. I didn’t. We never put the case on that basis. But the importance of enforcing the international will vis-à-vis W.M.D. was brought home to me by September 11th and therefore the place to start was Iraq, because Iraq was in breach of U.N. resolutions going back a number of years.”

Blair paused and then continued, “Now, I personally think that since then there has been an imperfect dialogue with Iran, but at least Europe and America are working together on it. Libya is giving up its W.M.D. The A.Q. Khan network, which was very dangerous indeed, has been effectively shut down. North Korea is an issue, but the world is focussed on it. It’s not been allowed to fester. The security reason, for me, for taking the action—and without the security reason you couldn’t have taken it simply on human-rights grounds—the security reason was very much linked to my perception that, post-September 11th, the whole game had changed. The balance of risk had changed. If, in the situation previously, the balance of doubt was toward inaction, after September 11th the balance of doubt, always, for me, fell with action.”

“Don’t forget Mommy’s yoga mat, Simon!”

According to Peter Stothard’s book “Thirty Days,” one of several informative accounts of the debate over Iraq in Britain, less than a week before the Commons voted on the war Blair told one of his aides, Sally Morgan, “What amazes me is how many people are happy for Saddam to stay. They ask why don’t we get rid of Mugabe, why not the Burmese lot. Yes, let’s get rid of them all. I don’t because I can’t, but when you can you should.”

That remark, and others like it, showed Blair’s increasing disenchantment with the left. Even though, in Clintonian fashion, he had moved his party to the center, he never imagined in 1997 that so many readers of the *Guardian*, say, would abandon him. (Similarly, many readers of the *Guardian* would never have imagined that a Labour Prime Minister would tighten up on civil liberties or court Rupert Murdoch, the über-purveyor of right-leaning media, as assiduously as Blair has.)

When I asked Blair about his exasperated remark at Downing Street, he said, “The biggest scandal in progressive politics is that you do not have people with placards out in the street on North Korea. I mean, that is a disgusting regime. The people are kept in a form of slavery, twenty-three million of them, and no one protests! You get a hundred thousand people out in the street of just about any European capital to protest about America, which, for all its faults, is a free country!

“The left has two impulses, which come into conflict with each other, though both of those impulses are perfectly good,” Blair went on. “One is peace, and the other is intervention to help people. Peace is great. But, if you’re living with a tyrannical regime, you don’t have much peace.”

I asked Blair about all the mistakes and even disasters that followed the fall of Saddam: the American failure to anticipate mass looting, the insurgency, the unending casualties, the torture at Abu Ghraib prison.

“On that I take a slightly heretical view,” he said. “I think that when anything like that happens it's ghastly and terrible and should be condemned immediately and dealt with. But I also think that people are cleverer in the Middle East, in Iraq and places like that, than we often give them credit for. And what they see is something terrible happening and the U.S. acting on it, the U.S. politicians under pressure, the U.S. soldiers responsible being prosecuted. I think people say these things happen, but the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship is that in a democracy when something terrible happens someone is held to account and in a dictatorship they're not.

"I had meeting after meeting about postwar planning, but all the postwar planning was really on the basis of humanitarian collapse," Blair continued. "I mean, that's what one thought was going to happen. That's what we were warned about." Only if the coalition successfully provided Iraq with the rudiments of a working, secure democracy, Blair said, would the insurgents fade. "Because how can they then turn toward the people in the Middle East and elsewhere, to Muslims the world over, and say, 'This is the terrible Satan exploiting and demeaning our people and preventing us from having our religion,' when people in Iraq are actually freer to worship in Iraq than they were and they've got a democracy!"

Blair's own frustrations were clear. The absence of W.M.D. in Iraq had left him feeling unmoored, evasive. I thought of McEwan's Perowne and his attempt to get behind Blair's earnest mask in the days before the war:

> Perowne wonders if such moments, stabs of cold panicky doubt, are an increasing part of the Prime Minister's days, or nights. There might not be a second UN resolution. The next weapons inspectors' report could also be inconclusive. The Iraqis might use biological weapons against the invasion force. Or, as one former inspector keeps insisting, there might no longer be any weapons of mass destruction at all. There's talk of famine and three million refugees, and they're already preparing the reception camps in Syria and Iran. The UN is predicting hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths. There could be revenge attacks on London. And still the Americans remain vague about their post-war plans. Perhaps they have none. In all, Saddam could be overthrown at too high a cost. It's a future no one can read. Government ministers speak up loyally, various newspapers back the war, there's a fair degree of anxious support in the country along with the dissent, but no one really doubts that in Britain one man alone is driving the matter forward. Night sweats, hideous dreams, the wild, lurching fantasies of sleeplessness?

Now, with the main fighting likely over, it remains unclear how history will judge Blair. Conor Gearty, a human-rights advocate who works in the same law chambers as Cherie Blair, told me that he was against the war and Blair's conduct of it, and yet he will sometimes ask his students at the London School of Economics if they can imagine Blair and Bush one day being declared heroes, for having opened the way to a democratizing wave in the authoritarian states of the Middle East. "My students just laugh," Gearty said. "But I admit it's not inconceivable."

In all the best accounts of Blair's diplomacy—Stothard's "Thirty Days," Peter Riddell's "Hug Them Close," John Kampfner's "Blair's Wars," the Hutton and Butler reports, and the BBC documentary "Iraq, Tony & the Truth"—the Prime Minister is convinced that Saddam is in violation of U.N. resolutions. He is not deliberately misleading Britain, but, at the same time, he appears too willing to accept unsubstantiated intelligence as absolute and to advertise that evidence as fact to the public. "At the heart of the problem was a culture clash: between the worlds of John le Carré's George Smiley and 'The West Wing,' between cautious words, caveats, and nuances of the Joint Intelligence Committee and the megaphone communications of 'spin doctors' and the twenty-four-hour news cycle," Peter Riddell, a columnist for the London *Times*, wrote. "The more public intelligence assessments are, the more that any qualifications and uncertainties disappear. Tony Blair and the Government were certainly at fault in not highlighting the doubts."

Even some of Blair's closest advisers appeared to know that they were playing a reckless game in preparing a dubious dossier for the leadership and for public consumption. In an e-mail that was sent in September, 2002—and came out a year later—Jonathan Powell, Blair's chief of staff, told the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, John Scarlett, that while the "dossier is good and convincing for those who are prepared to be convinced . . . the document does nothing to demonstrate a threat, let alone an imminent threat, from Saddam."

Peter Oborne, the political editor of the conservative *Spectator*, told me he thought that Blair could be a "broken" man as a result of the loss of trust. "This all matters because of a hundred thousand Iraqis killed, Abu Ghraib, a shameful thing for which no one was sacked," Oborne, who has just published a book on lying in British politics, said. "The readiness to break international law, to lie to voters and the international community, to ignore proper process, the sheer arrogance. It is the most evil and destructive and barbaric act of my lifetime and it has shaken my faith. Those W.M.D. did not exist and we were told that they did. . . . As a result, the entire political system has suffered a catastrophic collapse in trust in Blair himself."

Although some historians might well agree with Blair that the destruction of the Baathist regime—despite the casualties, the terrible postwar planning, Abu Ghraib—prevented further violence by Saddam and his sons and led to regional change, the antipathy to, even hatred of, George Bush among some Britons is so intense that Blair's most unforgivable sin seems to be his second-banana role in the Anglo-American alliance. This impression was only exacerbated when, in early 2003, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told the press that the coalition could live without British military help, or when White House aides such as Scooter Libby, Vice-President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, openly mocked Blair's calls for a (doomed) second resolution in the Security Council. "Oh, dear, we'd better not do that or we might upset the Prime Minister," Libby said, according to Philip Stephens's biography of Blair.

The British have not soured on the United States so much as they have come to long for a Prime Minister who will remove the taint of subservience from the relationship. Last year, English audiences went to see "Love Actually," a lighter-than-air comedy starring Hugh Grant as an improbably handsome, love-starved Prime Minister. People broke out in applause during a scene in which Prime Minister Grant, during a joint press conference at No. 10 with a libidinous (Clintonian), cowboy (Bushian) American President, played by Billy Bob Thornton, says that the relationship is no longer special. "I fear that this has become a bad relationship," he says, "a relationship based on the President taking exactly what he wants and casually ignoring all those things that really matter to Britain." And yet those applauding audiences knew that the "Love Actually" moment was as improbable under Tony Blair, or any modern Prime Minister, as Don Corleone's ascension to the papacy. Around the Downing Street offices, aides are quite sure that Blair will win, but they do not pretend that the Bush-Blair quandary has fully receded. "The problem is Bush," one of his senior advisers told me. "The monumental obligation to Bush has brought out latent anti-Americanism. People are concerned about trust and Blair's judgment. The fact that he has done the wrong thing on Iraq means they have grave concerns about his judgment."

In order to win back the left, the official said, Blair has to show that he is pushing the Americans to act more forcefully on the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, on aid to Africa, on climate change. "It doesn't balance Iraq," the official said, "but if you are a voter who needs permission to vote for Blair, even grudgingly, you can say at least he is O.K. on the Palestinian question or public service." For conservative voters, Blair needs to show that he is active in what another official called "Rudy Giuliani politics": getting rid of public drunkenness, eradicating annoyances like graffiti, getting control of discipline in the schools. The leaders of the Conservative Party concede that they can win only through apathy and protest votes; their over-all voice in this campaign, one Tory M.P. told me, is "more Dole in '96 than Bush in 2000, more bleak than hopeful." And that should be telling. Simon Jenkins, who writes a column in the *Times* that regularly attacks Blair, told me that, as long as the economy stays at its current level, "people feel quite good. And they are prepared to give credit to the smiling chap at the top. There is no one else but Tony Blair."

President Bush has not paid much of a price for the mistakes that accompanied the Iraq war. The Abu Ghraib torture scandal outraged world opinion, yet Rumsfeld had to endure little more than a day's questioning on Capitol Hill. Recent government investigations showed the entire intelligence bureaucracy to have been utterly mistaken on the question of Iraqi W.M.D. But there were no resignations of consequence—George Tenet stepped down as C.I.A. chief, but then was awarded the Medal of Freedom. During the Presidential debates, Bush could not name a major mistake that he had made in his first term; the words "Abu Ghraib" were never uttered in the debates by either Bush or John Kerry.

Blair has endured far more criticism, but he, too, may pay a minimal price at the polls. Recently, I was watching him on a television chat show called "The Wright Stuff," in which an unctuous host named Matthew Wright put the Prime Minister through yet another hour of the masochism campaign. (He called him Tony no fewer than twenty times.) At one point, Wright ran a tape for Blair of voters telling the camera what they wanted from him:

WOMAN: I would like Tony Blair to get rid of bureaucracy in hospitals, so that nurses could actually get on with their job. . . .

MAN: I want equal rights for fathers.

YOUNG WOMAN: I want Tony Blair to improve schools by giving teachers more power.

MAN: I want smoking banned in public.

WOMAN: I want university fees abolished.

WOMAN: I want honesty from the government.

MAN: I want regional government for the Northwest.

MAN: I want immigrants not to be treated like criminals.

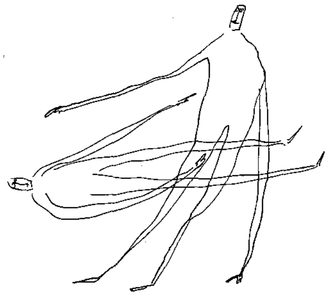
YOUNG WOMAN: I want Tony Blair to introduce congestion charges all over Britain, so it will encourage people to use public transport.

YOUNG WOMAN IN HEAD SCARF: I want Tony Blair to stop doing what the American government says, and more what the British public thinks.

WOMAN: I want Tony Blair to stop putting pressure on moms like me to go back to work.

"It's a long list," Blair said. But he could only be pleased. Only one person, the woman wearing a *hijab*, said a word about foreign policy; everything else was domestic bread and butter.

Blair is concentrating on winning his way back into the affections of the British public inch by inch. He will take any meeting, it seems. A reception for the British Society of Magazine Editors at Downing Street did not appear to feature the opinion magazines—*The New Statesman*, *The Spectator*, or *Prospect*. It cast a wider net: *CosmoGirl!*, *Waitrose Food Illustrated*, *Motorcycle News*, fashion magazines, travel magazines. I sat next to the editor of *Spirit & Destiny*. I asked her what was in her magazine and she said, "Alternate life style, health, and just a hint of witchcraft." Blair opened the meeting by saying, "A special thanks to the lady from *Flower Arranger* magazine who brought some flowers for Cherie."



Some of the questions were serious—about human rights in China, European alliances, the campaign—but there were more on things like "the BikeSafe campaign" and, more than once, the Prime Minister's opinion of Turkey Twizzlers. Then someone asked Blair whom he would choose as Chancellor of the Exchequer "if Gordon Brown were to be hit by a bus."

Blair is unshakable, and yet he paused, as if to catch his breath. "Well, that would be a really good one to speculate on," he said. "Actually, I saw him this morning and he is in very good health."

When the group of editors had fairly exhausted their cache of questions, something in Blair clicked—"Be a good host! Show them around!"—and, with a tinge of been-there-before irony, he gave the briefest of No. 10 house tours.

"Right," he said. "Well, we're in the state dining room." He pointed to one side of the room. "There's the silver. It's best to leave that alone." Then, pointing to a huge painting over his shoulder. "There's a portrait of King George. When he was around, we still had America."

Blair went back downstairs to his den. When I asked him what, if any, criticisms he had of the Bush White House, he was, as ever, careful, even indulgent. He said that the Administration's policies on everything from the environment to aid for Africa were not so much right wing as they were victims of bad press.

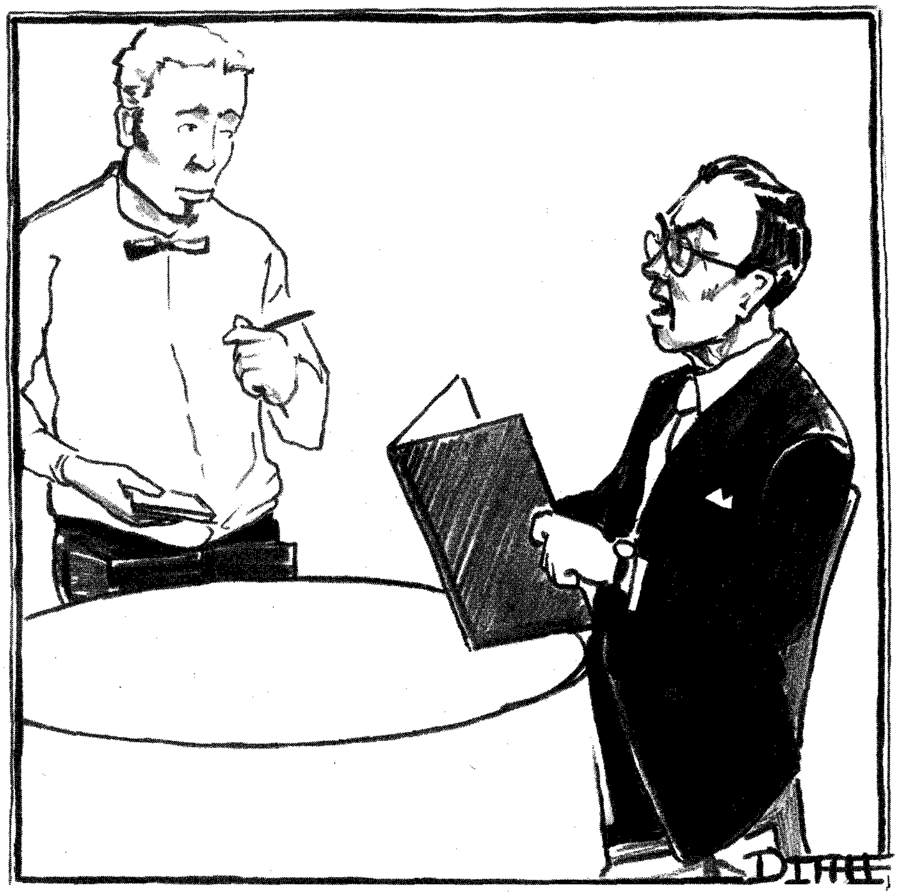
"The key is to understand where the Administration is coming from," he said. "The Administration is not saying Africa is unimportant. They are hardheaded about the need for good governance, anti-corruption, conflict resolution, as well as debt relief. Contrary again to what people think, they do accept the importance of tackling climate change and moving beyond the carbon-based economy. But they are going to be very hardheaded about how you do that and how it affects economic growth and living standards.

"It's a question of persuasion and also understanding where America is coming from, rather than *reading* about where the Americans are coming from, because my experience is often completely different."

Blair's delicacy about the United States is such that he seemed to dismiss the importance of anti-Americanism in Britain, especially in the universities and among the political élites and the media.

"It's a fashion!" he said. "For people to run down the relationship, to say Britain gets nothing out of it, to say I'm a poodle of America and all that stuff. . . . If you listen to any of the people doing chat shows or any of the rest of it, there's an underlying culture of mocking the relationship, saying it doesn't matter, et cetera. That's just the way it is. But if you are taking the long view and say, 'What's really in the interests of the country,' you just have to stand up and properly explain to people why the relationship is important and that we do share certain values.

"There's a part of the media in Britain that is anti-European, there's part that's anti-American, and there's a part that is anti both alliances," he continued. "Which is a bizarre position to try to put yourself in with Britain in the early part of the twenty-first century, as opposed to Britain at the end of the nineteenth century. . . . Sometimes you have to bring people back to the fundamentals and say, O.K., so you don't like this or that aspect of a policy. Are we really saying you want to give up this relationship with Europe or America? Of course not. It would be daft. No country in its senses would do that in this day and age, when, unless you are the size of China, India, or the U.S., the very thing that gives you purchase on all sorts of international situations which have a direct bearing on the interests of your country are these alliances. These are the two pillars of British foreign policy, and we'd be crackers to give up either."



"What would you recommend for someone who's wealthy?"

Last spring, Blair was thinking about whether to stand again. In 1994, he and Gordon Brown had a private dinner at a restaurant called Granita, in the North London neighborhood of Islington—an event that is the folkloric mystery of contemporary British politics. Both Blair and Brown have their designated leakers; the Brown leakers contend that Blair promised Brown that, after two terms as Prime Minister (or, alternatively, ten years as Party leader), Blair would step aside for Brown; and, in the meantime, Brown would have unprecedented authority in the broad realm of domestic policy. Blair told me, as he has told everyone else, that "you don't make deals" with such positions, and no such deal was made at Granita. What is clear is that Blair saw what had happened to Thatcher, who had once said that she would go "on and on"—a bit of presumption that was laid low when her own party threw her out and then replaced her with John Major. And so Blair decided to run for a third term but, unlike Thatcher, promised that he would not attempt a fourth.

"Nobody could go on for four terms," he said. "The country wouldn't want it."

In the past couple of weeks, Brown and Blair have again closed ranks, appearing together on the campaign trail and even in a gauzy ad put together by Anthony Minghella, the director of "The English Patient." Brown's televised support has helped Blair widen his lead.

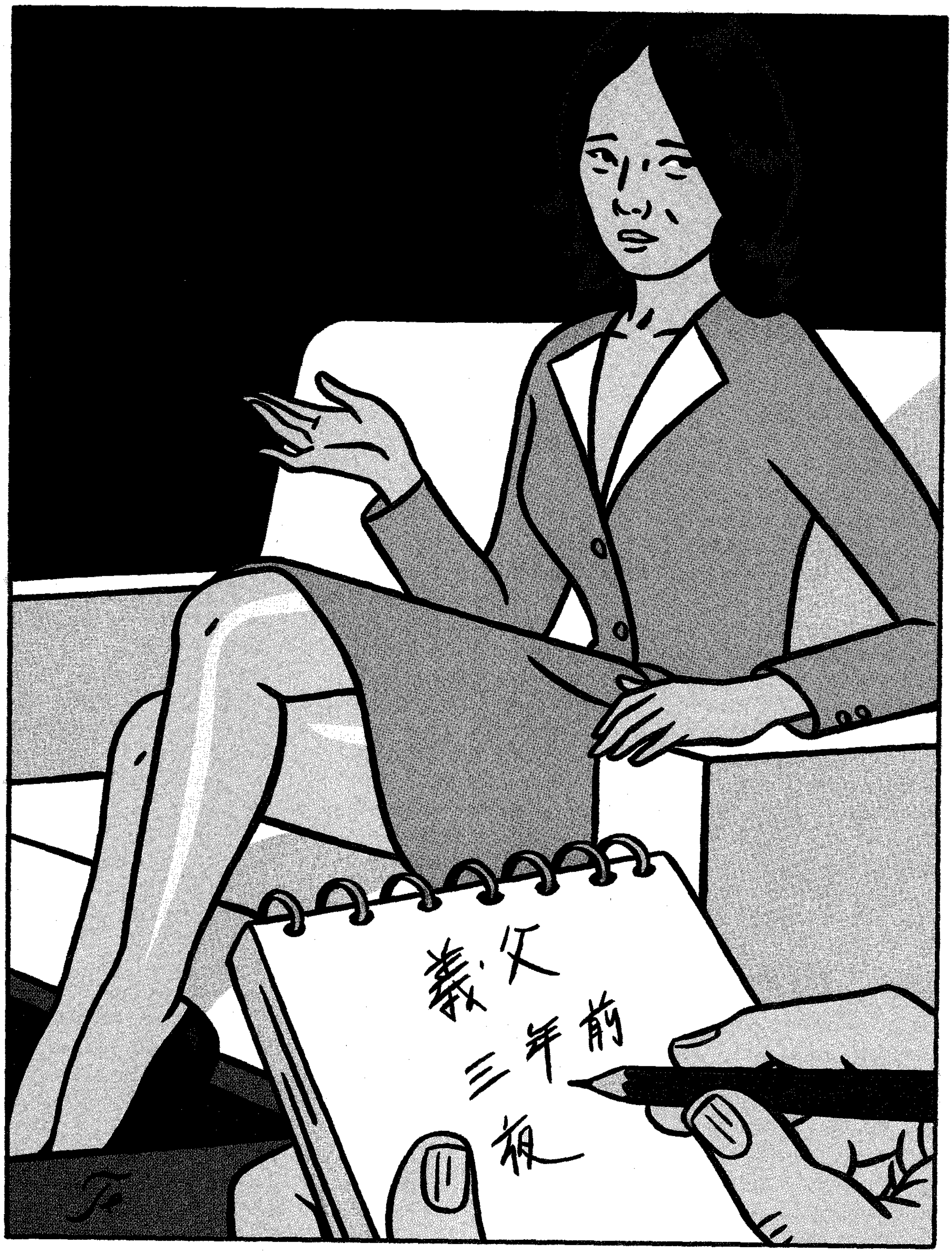
In moments of crisis, the press often reaches for a bit of physical description to match what it imagines must be Blair's exhaustion or despair. He is "ashen-faced." His "hair is thinning." He has lost weight. I didn't see any of that. He still looks preposterously youthful, despite episodes in the past year of cardiac arrhythmia. Yet Blair did one the favor of denying that he was always in absolute command even as the polls were breaking his way.

The job "is utterly relentless," he said. "You are dealing with a multiplicity of issues the whole time. And the decision-making process stops with you. That's an amazing thing—when every decision stops with you. How do you make sense of that? It's by recognizing that it's a privilege to do it, that you can do it only for a limited time, and that the only way to make the most of it is to keep your nerve, do what you think is right, recognize you won't please all of the people all of the time—in fact, pleasing some of the people some of the time is quite an achievement. And, whatever judgments are made at the time, history may take another view." ♦

FICTION

WHERE I'M LIKELY TO FIND IT

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI



"My husband's father was run over by a streetcar three years ago and killed," the woman said, and paused.

I didn't say a word, just looked her in the eye and nodded twice. During the pause, I glanced at the half-dozen pencils in my pencil tray, checking to see how sharp they were. Like a golfer carefully selecting the right club, I deliberated over which one to use, finally picking one that was neither too sharp nor too worn but just right.

"The whole thing's a little embarrassing," the woman said.

Keeping my opinion to myself, I laid a memo pad in front of me and tested the pencil by writing down the date and the woman's name.

"There aren't many streetcars left in Tokyo," she went on. "They've switched to buses almost everywhere. The few that are left are kind of like a memento of the past, I guess. And it was one of those that killed my father-in-law." She gave a silent sigh. "This was the night of October 1st, three years ago. It was pouring that night."

I noted down the basics of her story. *Father-in-law, three years ago, streetcar, heavy rain, October 1st, night.* I like to exercise great care when I write, so it took a while to get all this down.

"My father-in-law was completely drunk at the time. Otherwise, he obviously wouldn't have fallen asleep on a rainy night on the streetcar tracks."

She fell silent again, her lips closed, her eyes gazing steadily at me. She was probably waiting for me to agree with her.

"He must have been pretty drunk," I said.

"So drunk he passed out."

"Did your father-in-law often drink that much?"

"You mean did he often drink so much that he passed out?"

I nodded.

"He did get drunk every once in a while," she admitted. "But not all the time, and never so drunk that he'd fall asleep on the streetcar tracks."

How drunk would you have to be to fall asleep on the rails of a streetcar line? I wondered. Was the amount a person drank the real issue? Or did it have more to do with why he was getting drunk in the first place?

"What you're saying is that he got drunk sometimes but usually not falling-down drunk?" I asked.

"That's the way I see it," she replied.

"May I ask your age, if you don't mind?"

"You want to know how old I am?"

"You don't have to answer if you don't want to."

The woman rubbed the bridge of her nose with her index finger. It was a lovely, perfectly straight nose. My guess was that she had recently had plastic surgery. I used to go out with a woman who had the same habit. She'd had a nose job, and whenever she was thinking about something she rubbed the bridge of her nose with her index finger. As if she were making sure that her brand-new nose was still there. Looking at this woman in front of me now brought on a mild case of déjà vu. Which, in turn, conjured up vague memories of oral sex.

"I'm not trying to hide my age or anything," the woman said. "I'm thirty-five."

"And how old was your father-in-law when he died?"

"Sixty-eight."

"What did he do? His job, I mean."

"He was a priest."

"By priest you mean a Buddhist priest?"

"That's right. A Buddhist priest. Of the Jodo sect. He was the head of a temple in the Toshima Ward."

"It must have been a real shock," I said.

"That my father-in-law was run over by a streetcar?"

"Yes."

"Of course it was a shock. Especially for my husband," the woman said.

I noted some more things down on my memo pad. *Priest, Jodo sect, 68.*

The woman was sitting at one end of my love seat. I was in my swivel chair behind my desk. Two yards separated us. She had on a sharp-looking sage-green suit. Her legs were beautiful, and her stockings matched her black high-heeled shoes. The stilettos looked like some kind of deadly weapon.

"So what you've come to ask me," I said, "concerns your husband's late father?"

"No. It's not about him," she said. She shook her head slightly a couple of times to emphasize the negative. "It's about my husband."

"Is he also a priest?"

"No, he works at Merrill Lynch."

"The investment firm?"

"That's right," she replied, clearly a little irritated. What other Merrill Lynch is there? her tone implied. "He's a stockbroker."

I checked the tip of my pencil to see how worn it was, then waited for her to continue.

"My husband is an only son, and he was more interested in stock-trading than Buddhism, so he didn't succeed his father as head priest of the temple."

Which all makes perfect sense, don't you think? her eyes said, but since I didn't have any opinion one way or the other on Buddhism or stock-trading, I didn't respond. Instead, I adopted a neutral expression that indicated that I was absorbing every word.

"After my father-in-law passed away, my mother-in-law moved into an apartment in our condo, in Shinagawa. A different unit in the same building. My husband and I live on the twenty-sixth floor, and she's on the twenty-fourth. She lives alone. She'd lived in the temple with her husband, but after another priest came to take over she had to move. She's sixty-three. And my husband, I should add, is forty. He'll be forty-one next month—if nothing has happened to him, that is."

I wrote it all down. *Mother-in-law, 24th floor, 63. Husband, 40, Merrill Lynch, 26th floor, Shinagawa.* The woman waited patiently for me to finish.

"After my father-in-law died, my mother-in-law started having panic attacks. They seem to be worse when it's raining, probably because her husband died on a rainy night. A fairly common thing, I imagine."

I nodded.

"When the symptoms are bad, it's like a screw's come loose in her head. She calls us and my husband goes down the two floors to her place to take care of her. He tries to calm her down, to convince her that everything's going to be all right. If my husband's not at home, then I go."

She paused, waiting for my reaction. I kept quiet.

"My mother-in-law's not a bad person. I don't have any negative feelings toward her. It's just that she's the nervous type, and has always relied too much on other people. Do you understand the situation?"

"I think so," I said.

She crossed her legs, waiting for

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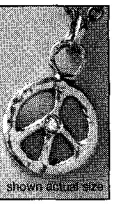

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me to write something new on my pad. But I didn't write anything down.

"She called us at ten one Sunday morning. Two Sundays—ten days—ago."

I glanced at my desk calendar. "Sunday the third of September?"

"That's right, the third. My mother-in-law called us at ten that morning," the woman said. She closed her eyes as if recalling it. If we were in a Hitchcock movie, the screen would have started to ripple at this point and we'd have segued into a flashback. But this was no movie, and no flashback was forthcoming. She opened her eyes and went on. "My husband answered the phone. He'd been planning to play golf, but it had been raining pretty hard since dawn, so he cancelled. If only it hadn't been raining, this never would have happened. I know I'm just second-guessing myself."

September 3rd, golf, rain, cancelled, mother-in-law—phoned. I wrote it all down.

"My mother-in-law said that she was having trouble breathing. She felt dizzy and couldn't stand up. So my husband got dressed, and without even shaving he went down to her apartment. He told me that it wouldn't take long and asked me to get breakfast ready."

"What was he wearing?" I asked.

She rubbed her nose again lightly. "Chinos and a short-sleeved polo shirt. His shirt was dark gray. The trousers were cream-colored. Both items we'd bought from the J.Crew catalogue. My husband's nearsighted and he always wears glasses. Metal-framed Armanis. His shoes were gray New Balance. He didn't have any socks on."

I noted down all the details.

"Do you want to know his height and weight?"

"That would help," I said.

"He's five-eight and weighs about one-fifty-eight. Before we got married, he weighed about one-thirty-five, but he's put on some weight."

I wrote down this information. I checked the tip of my pencil and exchanged it for another. I held the new pencil for a while, getting used to the feel.

"Do you mind if I go on?" she asked.

"Not at all," I said.

She uncrossed and recrossed her legs. "I was getting ready to make pancakes when his mother called. I always make pancakes on Sunday morning. If he doesn't play golf on Sundays, my husband eats a lot of pancakes. He loves them, with some crisp bacon on the side."

No wonder the guy put on twenty pounds, I thought.

"Twenty-five minutes later, my husband called me. He said that his mother had settled down and he was on his way upstairs. 'I'm starving,' he told me. 'Get breakfast ready so I can eat as soon as I get there.' So I heated up the frying pan and started cooking the pancakes and bacon. I heated up the maple syrup as well. Pancakes aren't difficult to make—it's all a matter of timing and doing everything in the right order. I waited and waited, but he didn't come home. The stack of pancakes on his plate was getting cold. I phoned my mother-in-law and asked her if my husband was still there. She said he'd left a long time ago."

She brushed an imaginary, metaphysical piece of lint off her skirt, just above the knee.

"My husband disappeared. He vanished into thin air. And I haven't heard from him since. He disappeared somewhere between the twenty-fourth and twenty-sixth floors."

"You contacted the police?"

"Of course I did," she said, her lips curling a little in irritation. "When he wasn't back by one o'clock, I phoned the police. But they didn't put much effort into looking for him. A patrolman from the local police station came over, but when he saw that there was no sign of a violent crime he couldn't be bothered. 'If he isn't back in two days,' he said, 'go to the precinct and file a missing-persons report.' The police seem to think that my husband wandered off somewhere on the spur of the moment, as if he were fed up with his life and just took off. But that's ridiculous. I mean, think about it. My husband went down to his mother's completely empty-handed—no wallet, no driver's license, no credit cards, no watch. He hadn't even shaved, for God's sake. And he'd just phoned me and told me to get the pancakes ready. Someone who's running away from home wouldn't call and ask you to make pancakes, would he?"

"You're absolutely right," I agreed. "But, tell me, when your husband went down to the twenty-fourth floor, did he take the stairs?"

"He never uses the elevator. He hates elevators. Says he can't stand being cooped up in a confined place like that."

"Still, you chose to live on the twenty-sixth floor of a high-rise?"

"We did. But he always uses the stairs. He doesn't seem to mind—he says it's good exercise and helps him to keep his weight down. Of course, it does take time."

Pancakes, twenty pounds, stairs, ~~elevator~~; I noted on my pad.

"So that's the situation," she said. "Will you take the case?"

No need to think about it. This was exactly the kind of case I'd been hoping for. I went through the motions of checking my schedule, though, and pretended to be shuffling a few things around. If you instantly agree to take a case, the client may suspect some ulterior motive.

"Luckily, I'm free until later this afternoon," I said, shooting my watch a glance. It was eleven-thirty-five. "If you don't mind, could you take me over to your building now? I'd like to see the last place you saw your husband."

"I'd be happy to," the woman said. She gave a small frown. "Does this mean you're taking the case?"

"It does," I replied.

"But we haven't talked about the fee yet."

"I don't need any money."

"I'm sorry?" she said, looking steadily at me.

"I don't charge anything," I explained, and smiled.

"But isn't this your job?"

"No, it isn't. This isn't my profession. I'm just a volunteer, so I don't get paid."

"A volunteer?"

"Correct."

"Still, you'll need something for expenses."

"No expenses needed. I work on a volunteer basis only, so I can't accept payment of any kind."

The woman still looked perplexed.

"Fortunately, I have another source of income that provides enough to live on," I explained. "I'm not doing this for the money. I'm just very interested in locating people who've disappeared. Or, more precisely, people who've disappeared in a *certain way.* I won't go into that—it'll only complicate things. But I am pretty good at this sort of thing."

"Tell me, is there some kind of religion or New Age thing behind all this?" she asked.

"Neither one. I have no connection with any religion or New Age group."

The woman glanced down at her shoes, perhaps contemplating how—if things got really weird—she might have to use the stiletto heels against me.

"My husband always told me not to trust anything that's free," the woman said. "I know this is rude to say, but he insisted that there's always a catch."

"In most cases, I'd agree with him," I said. "In our late-stage capitalist world, it's hard to trust anything that's free. Still, I hope you'll trust me. You have to, if we're going to get anywhere."

She reached over for her Louis Vuitton purse, opened it with a refined click, and took out a thick sealed envelope. I couldn't tell how much money was inside, but it looked like a lot.

"I brought something for expenses," she said.

I shook my head. "I don't accept any fee, gift, or payment of any kind. That's the rule. If I did accept a fee or a gift, the actions I'll be engaged in would be meaningless. If you have extra money and feel uncomfortable with not paying a fee, I suggest you make a donation to charity—the A.S.P.C.A., the Fund for Traffic Victims' Orphans, whichever group you like. If doing so makes you feel better."

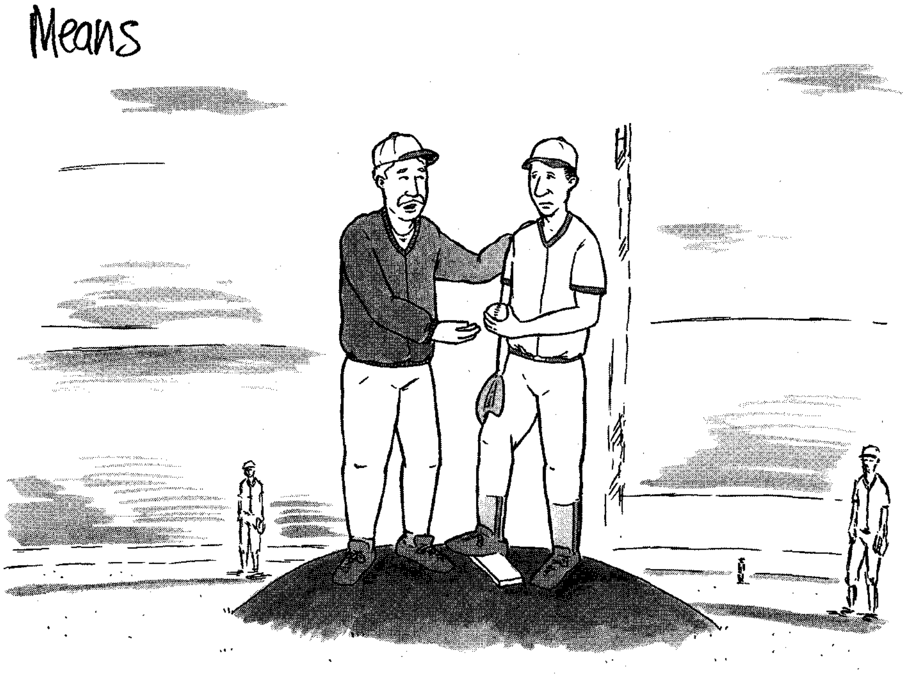
The woman frowned, took a deep breath, and returned the envelope to her purse. She placed the purse, once more fat and happy, back where it had been. She rubbed her nose again and looked at me, much like a retriever ready to spring forward and fetch a stick.

"The actions you'll be engaged in," she said in a somewhat dry tone.

I nodded and returned my worn pencil to the tray.

The woman with the sharp high heels took me to her building. She pointed out the door to her apartment (No. 2609) and to her mother-in-law's (No. 2417). A broad staircase connected the two floors, and I could see that even a casual stroll between them would take no more than five minutes.

"One of the reasons my husband bought this condo was that the stairs are wide and well lit," she said. "Most high-rise apartments skimp on the stairs. Wide staircases take up too much space, and, besides, most residents prefer the elevator. Condo developers like to spend their money on things that attract attention—a library, a marble lobby. My husband, though, insisted that the stairs



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were the critical element—the backbone of a building, he liked to say."

I have to admit, it really was a memorable staircase. On the landing between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth floors, next to a picture window, there was a sofa, a wall-length mirror, a standing ashtray, and a potted plant. Through the window you could see the bright sky and a couple of clouds drifting by. The window was sealed and couldn't be opened.

"Is there a space like this on every floor?" I asked.

"No. There's a little lounge on every fifth floor, not on every floor," she said. "Would you like to see our apartment and my mother-in-law's?"

"Not right now."

"Since my husband disappeared, my mother-in-law's nerves have taken a turn for the worse," she said. She fluttered her hand. "It was quite a shock for her, as I'm sure you can imagine."

"Of course," I agreed. "I don't think I'll have to bother her."

"I really appreciate that. And I'd like it if you would keep this from the neighbors, too. I haven't told anyone that my husband has vanished."

"Understood," I said. "Do you usually use these stairs yourself?"

"No," she said, raising her eyebrows slightly, as if she'd been unreasonably criticized. "*Normally* I take the elevator. When my husband and I are going out together, he leaves first and then I take the elevator and we meet up in the lobby. When we come home, I take the elevator by myself and he comes up on foot. It'd be dangerous to attempt all these stairs in heels, and it's hard on you physically."

"I imagine so."

I wanted to investigate things on my own, so I asked her to go have a word with the building super. "Tell him that the guy wandering around between the twenty-fourth and twenty-sixth floors is doing an insurance investigation," I instructed her. "If someone thinks I'm a thief casing the place and calls the police, that would put me in a bit of a spot. I don't have any real reason to be loitering here, after all."

"I'll tell him," the woman said. She disappeared up the stairs. The sound of her heels rang out like the pounding of nails to post some ominous proclamation, then gradually faded into silence. I was left alone.

The first thing I did was walk the stairs from the twenty-sixth floor to the twenty-fourth and back a total of three times. The first time, I walked at a normal pace, the next two times much more slowly, carefully observing everything around me. I concentrated so hard I barely blinked. Every event leaves traces behind, and my job was to tease these out. The problem was that the staircase had been thoroughly scrubbed. There wasn't a scrap of litter to be found. Not a single stain or dent, no butts in the ashtray. Nothing.

Going up and down the steps without a break had tired me out, so I rested for a minute on the sofa. It was covered in vinyl, and was not what you'd call high quality. But you had to admire the building management for having had the foresight to put a sofa there, where few people were likely ever to use it. Across from the sofa was the mirror. Its surface was spotless, and it was set at the perfect angle for the light shining in the window. I sat there for a time, gazing at my own reflection. Maybe on that Sunday the woman's husband, the stockbroker, had taken a break here, too, and looked at his own reflection. At his own unshaven face.

I had shaved, of course, but my hair was getting a bit long. The hair behind my ears curled up like the fur of a long-haired hunting dog that had just paddled its way across a river. I made a mental note to go to the barber. I noticed that the color of my trousers didn't match my shoes. I'd had no luck in coming up with a pair of socks that matched my outfit, either. Nobody would think it strange if I finally got my act together and did a little laundry. Otherwise, though, my reflection was just that—the same old me. A forty-five-year-old bachelor who couldn't care less about stocks or Buddhism.

Come to think of it, Paul Gauguin had been a stockbroker, too. But he wanted to devote himself to painting, so one day he left his wife and kids and went to Tahiti. Wait a sec. . . . I thought for a minute. No, Gauguin couldn't have left his wallet behind, and if they'd had American Express cards back then I bet he would have taken one along. He was going all the way to Tahiti, after all. I can't picture him saying to his wife, "Hey, honey, I'll be back in a minute—make sure the pancakes are ready," before he vanished. If you're planning to disappear, you have to go about it in a systematic way.

I stood up from the sofa, and as I made my way up the stairs again I started to mull over the notion of freshly made pancakes. I concentrated as fiercely as I could and tried to picture the scene: You're a forty-year-old stockbroker, it's Sunday morning, it's raining hard outside, and you're on your way home to a stack of hot pancakes. The more I thought about it, the more it whetted my appetite. I'd had only one small apple since morning.

Maybe I should zip over to Denny's and dig into some pancakes, I thought. I'd passed a sign for Denny's on the drive here. It was probably even close enough to walk. Not that Denny's made great pancakes—the butter and the syrup weren't up to my standards—but they would do. Truth be told, I'm a huge pancake fan. Saliva began to well up in my mouth. But I shook my head and tried to banish all pancake thoughts for the time being. I blew away all the clouds of illusion. Save the pancakes for later, I cautioned myself. You've still got work to do.

"I should have asked her if her husband had any hobbies," I said to myself. "Maybe he actually *was* into painting."

But that didn't make sense—any guy who was so into painting that he'd abandon his family wouldn't be the type to play golf every Sunday. Can you imagine Gauguin or van Gogh or Picasso decked out in golf shoes, kneeling down on the tenth green, trying to read the putt? I couldn't.

I sat down on the sofa again and looked at my watch. It was one-thirty-two. I shut my eyes and focussed on a spot in my head. My mind a total blank, I gave myself up to the sands of time and let the flow take me wherever it wanted. Then I opened my eyes and looked at my watch. It was one-fifty-seven. Twenty-five minutes had vanished somewhere. Not bad, I told myself. A pointless way of whittling away time. Not bad at all.

I looked at the mirror again and saw my usual self there. I raised my right hand, and my reflection raised its left. I raised my left hand and it raised its right. I made as if to lower my right hand, then quickly lowered the left; my reflection made as if to lower its left hand, then quickly lowered its right. The way it should be. I got up from the sofa and walked the twenty-five flights down to the lobby.

I visited the staircase every day at around 11 A.M. The building super and I got pretty friendly (the boxes of chocolates I brought him didn't hurt), and I was allowed to wander the building at will. All told, I made about two hundred round trips between the twenty-fourth and twenty-sixth floors. When I got tired, I took a rest on the sofa, gazed out the window at the sky, checked my reflection in the mirror. I'd gone to the barber and got a good trim, done all my laundry, and was able to wear trousers and socks that actually matched, vastly reducing the chances that people would be whispering about me behind my back.

No matter how hard I looked, I couldn't pick up a single clue, but I wasn't discouraged. Finding a key clue is a lot like training an uncoöperative animal. It requires patience and focus. Not to mention intuition.

As I went to the apartment building every day, I discovered that there were other people who used the staircase. I'd find candy wrappers on the floor, a Marlboro butt in the ashtray, a discarded newspaper.

On Sunday afternoon, I passed a man who was running up the stairs. A short guy in his thirties, with a serious look, in a green jogging outfit and Asics sneakers. He was wearing a large Casio watch.

"Hi, there," I said. "Do you have a minute?"

"Sure," the man said, and he pushed a button on his watch. He took a couple of deep breaths. His Nike tank top was sweaty at the chest.

"Do you always run up and down these stairs?" I asked.

"I do. Up to the thirty-second floor. Going down, though, I take the elevator. It's dangerous to run down stairs."

"You do this every day?"

"No, work keeps me too busy. I do a few round trips on the weekends. If I get

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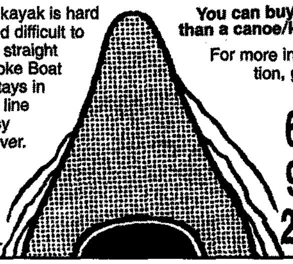

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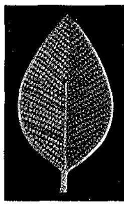

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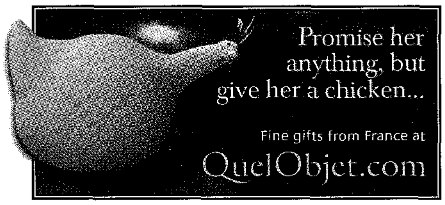

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off work early, I sometimes run during the week."

"You live in this building?"

"Sure," the runner said. "On the seventeenth floor."

"I was wondering if you know Mr. Kurumizawa, who lives on the twenty-sixth floor."

"Mr. Kurumizawa?"

"He's a stockbroker, wears metal-framed Armani glasses, and always uses the stairs. Five feet eight, forty years old."

The runner gave it some thought. "Yeah, I do know that guy. I talked with him once. I pass him on the staircase sometimes when I'm running. I've seen him sitting on the sofa. He's one of those guys who use the stairs because they hate the elevator, right?"

"That's the guy," I replied. "Besides him, are there a lot of people who use the stairs every day?"

"Yeah, there are," he said. "Not that many, maybe, but there are a few you could call regulars. People who don't like to take elevators. And there are two other people I've seen who run up the stairs like me. There's no good jogging course around here, so we use the stairs. There are also a few people who walk up the stairs for exercise. I think more people use these stairs than in most apartment buildings—they're so well lit, spacious, and clean."

"Do you happen to know any of these people's names?"

"I'm afraid I don't," the runner said. "I just know their faces. We say hi as we pass each other, but I don't know their names. This is a huge building."

"I see. Well, thanks for your time," I said. "Sorry to keep you. And good luck with the jogging."

The man pressed the button on his stopwatch and resumed his jog.

On Tuesday, as I was sitting on the sofa, an old man came down the stairs. Mid-seventies, I'd say, with gray hair and glasses. He was wearing sandals, gray slacks, and a long-sleeved shirt. His clothes were spotless and neatly ironed. The old man was tall and had good posture. He looked to me like a recently retired elementary-school principal.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello," I replied.

"Do you mind if I smoke here?"

"Not at all," I said. "Go right ahead."

The old man sat down beside me and pulled a pack of Seven Stars from a trouser pocket. He struck a match, lit his cigarette, then blew out the match and placed it in the ashtray.

"I live on the twenty-sixth floor," he said, slowly exhaling smoke. "With my son and his wife. They say the place gets too smoky, so I always come here when I want to have a cigarette. Do you smoke?"

"I quit twelve years ago," I told him.

"I should quit, too," the old man said. "I smoke only a couple of cigarettes a day, so it shouldn't be too hard. But, you know, going to the store to buy cigarettes, coming down here for a smoke—it helps pass the time. Gets me up and moving and keeps me from thinking too much."

"You keep smoking for your health is what you're saying," I said.

"Exactly," the old man said with a serious look.

"You said you live on the twenty-sixth floor?"

"Yes."

"Do you know Mr. Kurumizawa, in 2609?"

"I do. He wears glasses and works at Salomon Brothers, I believe?"

"Merrill Lynch," I corrected him.

"That's right—Merrill Lynch," the old man said. "I've talked with him here. He uses this sofa sometimes."

"What does he do here?"

"I don't really know. He sort of just sits here, staring off into space. I don't believe he smokes."

"He looks like he's thinking about something?"

"I'm not sure if I could tell the difference—between just staring into space and thinking. We're thinking all the time, aren't we? Not that we live in order to think, but the opposite isn't true, either—that we think in order to live. I believe, contrary to Descartes, that we sometimes think in order *not* to be. Staring into space might unintentionally actually have the opposite effect. At any rate, it's a difficult question."

The old man took a deep drag on his cigarette.

"Did Mr. Kurumizawa ever mention any problems at work or at home?" I asked.

The old man shook his head and

dropped his cigarette into the ashtray. "As I'm sure you know, water always picks the shortest route to flow down. Sometimes, though, the shortest route is actually formed *by* the water. The human thought process is a lot like that. At least, that's my impression. But I haven't answered your question. Mr. Kurumizawa and I never once talked about such deep things. We just chatted—about the weather, the apartment association's regulations, things of that nature."

"I understand. Sorry to have taken up your time," I said.

"Sometimes we don't need words," the old man said, as if he hadn't heard me. "Rather, it's words that need *us*. If we were no longer here, words would lose their whole function. Don't you think so? They would end up as words that are never spoken, and words that aren't spoken are no longer words."

"Exactly," I said. "It's sort of like a Zen koan."

"That's right," the old man said, nodding, and stood up to go back to his apartment. "Take care, now," he said.

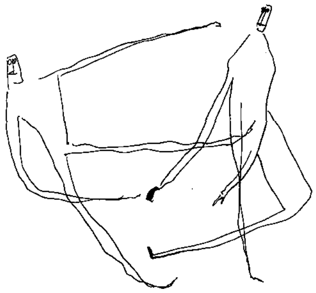
"Goodbye," I replied.

After two the following Friday afternoon, as I made my way to the landing between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth floors, I found a little girl sitting on the sofa, gazing at herself in the mirror as she sang a song. She looked just old enough to have started elementary school. She was wearing a pink T-shirt and denim shorts, with a green daypack on her back and a hat in her lap.

"Hi, there," I said.

"Hi," she said, and stopped singing.

I wanted to sit down on the sofa beside her, but if anybody passed by and saw us they might think something strange was going on, so instead I leaned against the windowsill, keeping a distance between us.



"Is school out?" I asked.

"Don't want to talk 'bout school," she said, in no uncertain terms.

"Well, then, we won't," I said. "Do you live in this building?"

"Yes," she said. "On the twenty-seventh floor."

"You don't walk all the way up, do you?"

"The elevator's stinky," the girl said. "The elevator's stinky, so I'm walking up to the twenty-seventh floor." She looked at herself in the mirror and gave a big nod. "Not always, but sometimes."

"Don't you get tired?"

She didn't answer. "You know something? Of all the mirrors in the staircase, this one reflects the best. It's not at all like the mirror in our apartment."

"How do you mean?"

"Take a look yourself," the girl said.

I took a step forward, faced the mirror, and looked for a while at my reflection. And, sure enough, the image of me reflected in the mirror was a few degrees removed from what I was used to seeing. The me in the mirror looked plumper and happier. As if I'd just polished off a stack of hot pancakes.

"Do you have a dog?" the girl asked.

"No, I don't. I do have some tropical fish."

"Hmm," she said. Her interest in tropical fish seemed nonexistent.

"Do you like dogs?" I asked.

She didn't respond, but asked a different question. "Do you have any children?"

"No, I don't," I answered.

She eyed me suspiciously. "Mom says never talk to men who don't have children. Mom says there's a *likely*-hood they're weird."

"Not necessarily," I said, "though I do agree with your mom that you have to be careful when you talk to men you don't know."

"But I don't think *you're* weird."

"I don't, either."

"You're not going to show me your weenie, are you?"

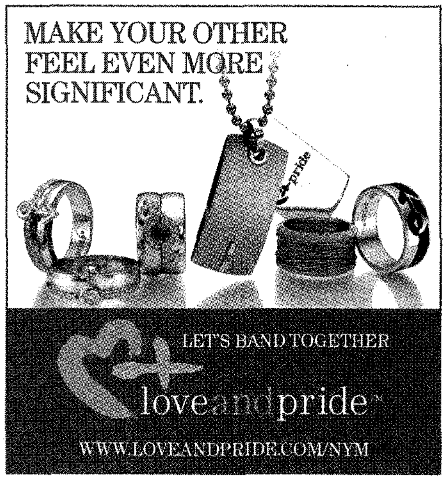
"No."

"And you don't collect little girls' underpants?"

"No way."

"Do you collect anything?"

I had to think about it. I did collect first editions of modern poetry, but bringing that up wouldn't get us any-



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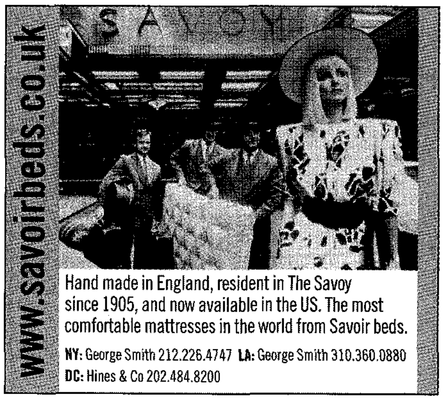

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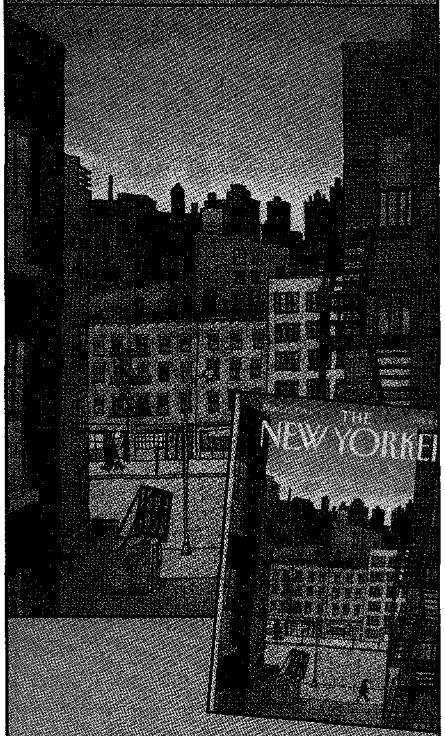

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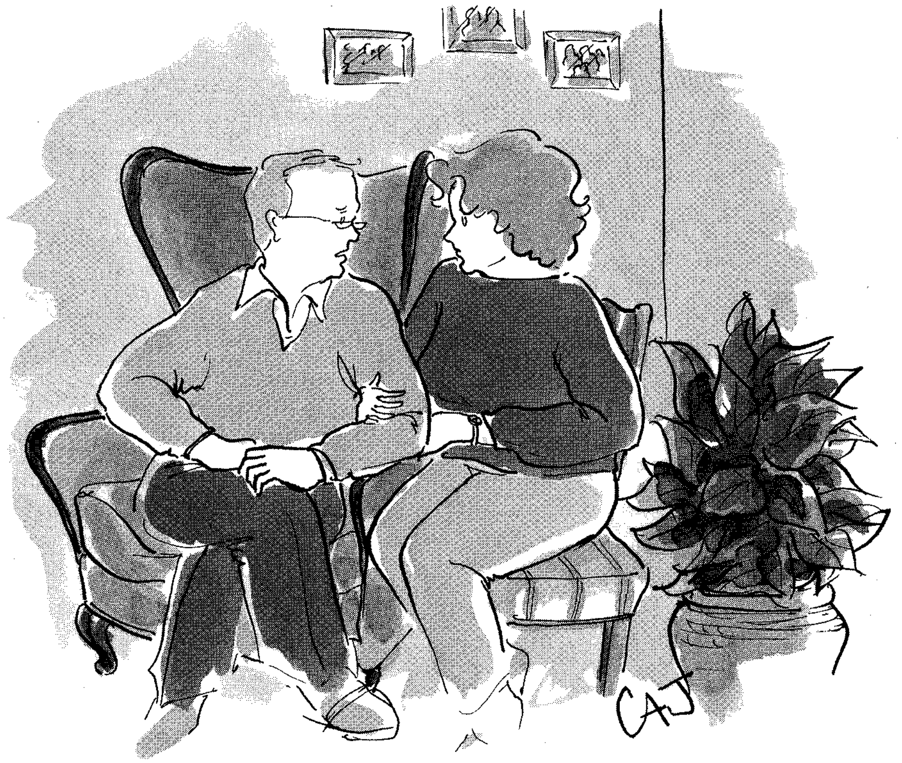

"I don't understand why you insist on pushing all my buttons—they all do the same thing."

• •

where. "No, I don't really collect anything. How about you?"

The girl gave it some thought, and shook her head a couple of times. "I don't collect anything, either."

We were silent for a moment.

"Hey, at Mister Donut which doughnut do you like the best?"

"Old-fashioned," I said right away.

"I don't know that one," the girl said. "You know which ones I like? I like full moons and bunny whips."

"I've never heard of those."

"They're the ones with fruit or sweet bean paste inside. They're great. But Mom says if you eat sweets all the time you end up dumb, so she doesn't buy them for me much."

"They sound delicious," I said.

"What are you doing here? I saw you yesterday," the girl said.

"I'm looking for something."

"What is it?"

"I have no idea," I admitted. "I imagine it's like a door."

"A door?" the girl repeated. "What kind of door? There are all shapes and colors of doors."

I thought about this. What sort of shape and color? Come to think of it, I'd never once thought about the shape and color of doors. "I don't know. I wonder what shape and color it might be. Maybe it isn't even a door."

"You mean maybe it's an umbrella or something?"

"An umbrella?" I said. "Hmm. No reason it can't be an umbrella, I suppose."

"But umbrellas and doors are different shapes and sizes, and what they do is different."

"That's right. But I'm sure I'll recognize it when I see it. Like, 'Hey! This is it!' Whether it's an umbrella, a door, or even a doughnut."

"Hmm," the girl said. "Have you been looking for a long time?"

"For a long time. Since before you were born."

"Is that right?" she said, staring at her palm for a while. "How 'bout I help you find it?"

"I'd really like that," I said.

"So I should look for something, I don't know what it is but it might be a door or an umbrella or a doughnut or an elephant?"

"Exactly," I said. "But when you see it you'll know that's it."

"Sounds like fun," she said. "But I have to go home now. I have a ballet lesson."

"See you later," I said. "Thanks for talking with me."

"Tell me again the name of the doughnut you like?"

"Old-fashioned."

Frowning, the girl repeated the word "old-fashioned" over and over. Then she stood and vanished up the stairs, singing all the while. I closed my eyes, gave myself up once more to the flow, letting time be pointlessly whittled away.

On Saturday morning, I got a call from my client.

"My husband's been found," she said, skipping a greeting. "I was contacted by the police around noon yesterday. They found him sleeping on a bench in a waiting room in Sendai Station. He didn't have any money on him, or I.D., but after a while he remembered his name, address, and phone number. I flew to Sendai right away. It's my husband, all right."

"But why would he be in Sendai?" I asked her.

"He has no idea how he got here. He just woke up on a bench in Sendai Station with a railroad employee shaking his shoulder. How he got all the way to Sendai without any money, how he ate for the last twenty days—he doesn't remember a thing."

"How was he dressed?"

"He had on the same clothes as when he left our apartment. He had a beard and he'd lost more than twenty pounds. He'd also lost his glasses somewhere. I'm calling from a hospital in Sendai right now. They're running some tests. CT scans, X-rays, neurological exams. His mind seems entirely fine now, and nothing is physically wrong with him. But his memory's gone. He remembers leaving his mother's place and walking up the stairs, but, after that, nothing. Anyway, we should be able to come back to Tokyo tomorrow."

"That's great news."

"I really appreciate all you've done trying to find him, I really do. But now that things have turned out this way I don't need you to continue the investigation."

"I guess not," I said.

"The whole thing's been so crazy and incomprehensible, but at least I have my husband back safe and sound, and that's all that matters."

"Of course," I said. "That's what's important."

"Are you sure, now, that you won't accept anything for your services?"

"As I told you the first time we met, I can't accept any kind of payment whatsoever. So please don't trouble yourself over that. I do appreciate the sentiment, though."

Silence. A refreshing silence that implied we'd come to a mutual understanding. I played my own role in supporting this, appreciating the calm.

"Take care of yourself, then," the woman finally said, and hung up, her tone carrying with it a hint of sympathy.

I put down the phone. For a while I sat there, slowly twirling a brand-new pencil, staring at the blank memo pad in front of me. The white pad reminded me of a freshly washed sheet just back from the laundry. The sheet made me think of a calico cat stretched out on it for a pleasant siesta. That image—of a napping cat on a freshly laundered sheet—helped me relax. I started to search my memory, and I carefully wrote down on my memo pad, one by one, all the salient points the woman had made: *Sendai Station, Friday around noon, telephone, lost twenty pounds, same clothes, lost his glasses, memory of twenty days gone.*

Memory of twenty days gone.

I laid the pencil on the desk, leaned back in my chair, and stared up at the ceiling. The ceiling had some irregular spots here and there, and if I squinted it looked like a celestial chart. I gazed up at this imaginary starry night and wondered if maybe I should start smoking again—for my health. My head was filled with the click of the woman's high heels on the stairway.

"Mr. Kurumizawa," I said aloud to a corner of the ceiling. "Welcome back to the real world. Back to the three sides of your beautiful triangular world—your panic-attack-prone mother, your wife, with her icepick heels, and good old Merrill Lynch."

I imagine my search will continue—somewhere. A search for something that could very well be shaped like a door. Or maybe something closer to an umbrella, or a doughnut. Or an elephant. A search that, I hope, will take me where I'm likely to find it. ♦

(*Translated, from the Japanese, by Philip Gabriel.*)

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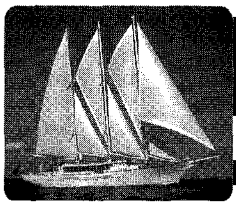

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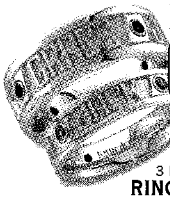

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RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Writing, fighting, and André Malraux.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

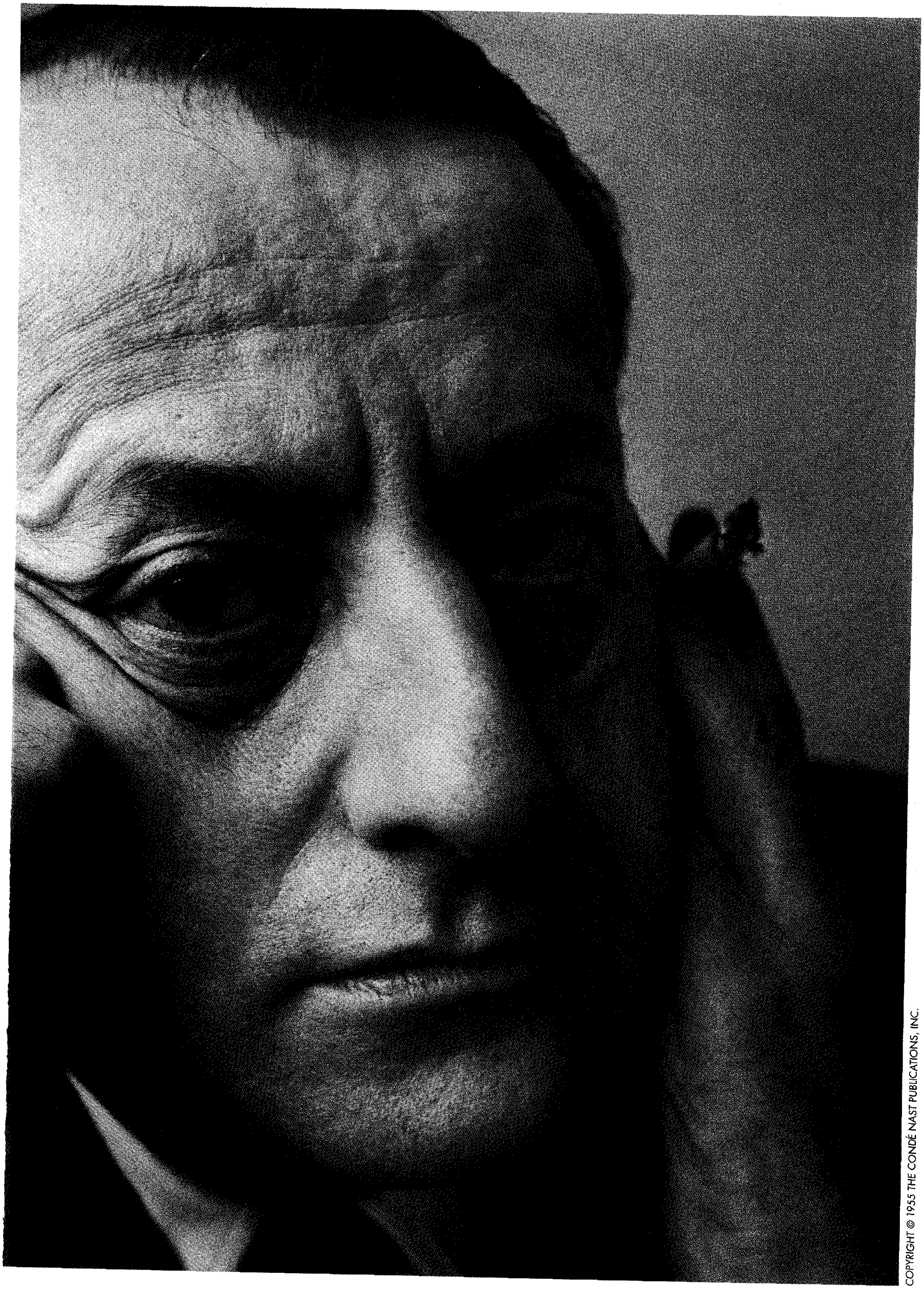
"Success has always been the greatest liar," Nietzsche wrote. "'Great men' as they are venerated are subsequent pieces of wretched minor fiction." André Malraux tended to venerate, often uncritically, the colossi he met in the course of a glorious career as a writer and statesman (de Gaulle, Mao, Trotsky, Nehru, Senghor, Kennedy, Le Corbusier, Picasso—his enthusiasms were catholic), and, while he is best known for his Byronic exploits and his epic novels "Man's Fate" and "Man's Hope" (about the Chinese Revolution and the Spanish Civil War), one of his specialties was the funeral oration, preferably declaimed in a stirring tremolo from a podium at the Panthéon, where he, too, is interred.

One could hardly call Malraux's life wretched or his fiction minor, but his latest biographer, Olivier Todd, whose previous subject was Camus, focusses on the pretenses, embroideries, and outright lies—the mythomania—that, in his view, compromise his subject's achievements. "Malraux: A Life," translated from the French by Joseph West (Knopf; $35), is the product of assiduous new archival research into the history that its subject made and lived (or fudged). The author, an alumnus of Cambridge, describes himself as an empiricist of the English school, and his book is what the French like to call "an Anglo-Saxon biography," which seems to mean an unfashionably fat tome frilled with footnotes. But, despite his cool Anglophilic rigor and his regard for fair play—an expression that has no French translation—Todd's portrait suffers from a tone of snide and at times vulgar contempt ("Hitler and Mussolini are not Malraux's style") that has the paradoxical effect of heightening Malraux's stature, and the reader's partiality to him, despite his flamboyant self-aggrandizing. Milton's Satan is the same sort of character.

Malraux was born in 1901 to ill-matched parents, who separated shortly thereafter. His father, Fernand, was an amateur inventor and a ladies' man who cut a handsome figure in his officer's uniform but served without distinction as a tanker in the First World War, dabbled in the stock market, and sired two sons by a mistress, Roland and Claude. His melancholy wife, Berthe, moved in with her mother, who lived above a confectioner's shop that she owned in a Paris suburb, and a spinster sister—André's beloved Aunt Marie—who helped raise him. He was an intense and precocious boy, afflicted all his life with tics, twitches, and grunts, which Todd diagnoses as Tourette's syndrome. André's pious mother "apparently found him ugly" (photographs of a sweet-faced youth don't agree), and "a sensual component," Todd writes, "was missing" in their relationship. Yet André was the sun around whom a household of maternal satellites revolved, and, growing up

PHOTOGRAPH BY IRVING PENN

Malraux in 1954. His opportunism was as enterprising as his conscientiousness.

COPYRIGHT © 1955 THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS, INC.

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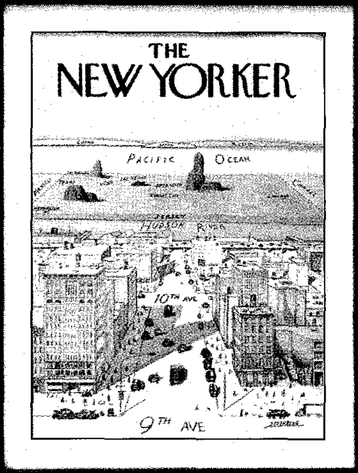

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coddled, he sought the antidote of virile company wherever he could find it, joining a Scout troop and revelling in the affection of Fernand's father, a grizzled ship owner with a big house near the port in Dunkirk. Malraux, despite his many incarnations, essentially spent his life working at one job: trying to discover—and idealizing—what it means to be a man.

A mediocre school record is often the first possession that the self-invented upgrade, and Malraux claimed to be a graduate of the Institute of Oriental Languages, in Paris, when, given his breadth of culture, he was something infinitely more remarkable: an autodidact whose formal education ended at sixteen, without a baccalaureate. Adolescence is an age of compulsive posing that coincides with a quest for authenticity, and Malraux never outgrew either. Jean Grosjean, an erudite priest who became Malraux's bosom friend in 1940, when they were fellow-soldiers captured by the Germans and assigned to cut wood in a village near Sens, wrote that his "strength and weakness [was] to have triumphed over childhood without succumbing to the slightest maturity." The footloose dropout haunted the museums that he later beautified, as de Gaulle's minister of culture, and he supported himself by trolling the quais for rare books and reselling them profitably to an antiquarian. He launched the first of his many deluxe art-publishing ventures; edited some erotica; styled himself an aesthete; frequented a bohemia of poets and gallerists; and contributed essays on Cubist poetry and other esoteric themes to *Action*, a review of avant-garde literature.

One of his colleagues was the homely but smart and impetuous Clara Goldschmidt, a polyglot of German-Jewish origin three years his senior, who worked at *Action* as a translator. "She talks almost as much as he does," Todd writes, "and with the same self-assurance." (Todd's own tic is the grating use of the Malrucian historical present, for five hundred pages.) Though Clara already had a lover and a refreshingly low opinion of monogamy, and André, at twenty, was legally still a minor, they eloped on a lark to Italy. A Goldschmidt family friend discovered them sharing a compartment on the Paris-to-Florence express, and her parents' outrage was only slightly mollified by the announcement—telegraphed on the way to Venice—of their engagement. Fernand, who thought that "for a Jew, Clara dresses pretty well," promptly helped his son squander her dowry—the equivalent of eight hundred thousand dollars—on the stock market.

Broke but undaunted, the newlyweds set off in 1923 on an intrepid journey to Indochina, in the mode, or so they fancied, of T. E. Lawrence and Rimbaud. The "stench of the alleyways" and "the social reality of colonialism" made a deep impression, Todd writes. But so did the charm of native bazaars and Chinese violins; of grand hotels and boat trips up the Mekong; of lakeside temples of pink sandstone and a camp in the dappled foliage at Banteay Srei, where—with chisels and picks—Malraux and an old schoolmate surreptitiously pried loose some tenth-century Khmer sculptures that they hoped to sell at the attractive going rates (twelve thousand dollars for an apsara) in London or New York. They were arrested by the colonial police, who made an example of the feckless vandals with a show trial in Phnom Penh. Clara had a breakdown and sailed home to Paris (exercising her convictions about free love by sleeping with a fellow-passenger), where she organized a campaign to pressure the court for an acquittal. An imposing roster of Big Pens—Gide, Mauriac, and Breton, among others—signed a petition attesting to Malraux's literary promise, as if one sort of national treasure shouldn't be punished for pillaging another. ("The undersigned . . . have confidence in the consideration that justice is wont to show to all those who help increase the intellectual wealth of our country.") A three-year prison term was suspended, though an aura of shadiness lingered; Malraux wasn't finished dealing in antiquities of dubious provenance or denouncing the injustice of a colonial regime, and throughout his life his opportunism was as enterprising as his conscientiousness.

In Saigon, he launched a feisty, progressive newspaper, *L'Indochine Enchaînée*, that earned some modest fame for exposés of colonial land grabs and other chicanery, along with the gratifying enmity of the local authorities and, for Malraux, his first laurels as a champion of the people. He and Clara spent two "rewarding years" in Cambodia and Cochin China (contemporary Vietnam), which Todd describes as a political incubation period, and they informed Malraux's prescient grasp of Asia's incubating geopolitical importance. The couple returned to Paris, where Malraux took a prestigious editorial job at Gallimard (which he kept until his death, in 1976) and began writing in earnest, while continuing to accumulate capital and credentials as an adventurer. He visited the Soviet Union, Persia, Afghanistan, Burma, Malaysia, and America, and later claimed to have located the Queen of Sheba's ruined capital while flying over the Yemeni desert. Mainland China wasn't on his itinerary until the early thirties, yet for decades he floated the fiction that he'd fought the hand-to-hand battle for Canton in 1927 while serving as a commissioner of propaganda for the Kuomintang. He drew upon this "experience" for his novel "The Conquerors" (1928), whose revolutionary hero, the Marxist Garine, is the first of many glamorous alter egos. "Malraux's oeuvre reveals less of what the author is . . . and more of what he wants to be," as the French critic Gaëtan Picon remarked.

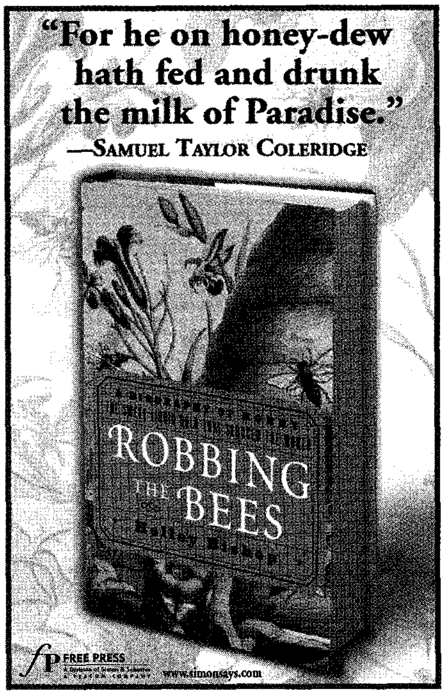
In 1933, Clara gave birth to a daughter, Florence. Malraux was happy for a girl; "I couldn't bear a caricature of myself," he said—though his impostures are often just that. The same year, he published "Man's Fate" ("La Condition Humaine"), the last volume of an Asian trilogy. In a sequence of lushly violent, staccato scenes whose cinematic potential appealed to Eisenstein, the novel recounts the Communist uprising in Shanghai, its brutal repression by Chiang Kai-shek, and its expedient betrayal by the Soviets. The punch and poignance of the prose are still fresh, as in the famous opening scene, in which the insurgent Ch'en assassinates a businessman:

> Through the great gash in the mosquito-netting, he could see very clearly; the eyelids open—had he been able to wake up?—the eyeballs white. Around the dagger the blood was beginning to flow, black in that deceptive light. In its balanced weight the body still held life. Ch'en could not let go the handle. A current of unbearable anguish passed between the corpse and himself, through the dagger, his stiffened arm, his aching shoulder, to the very depth of his chest, to his convulsive heart—the only moving thing in the room.

Over the years, "Man's Fate" has served as an inspiration for countless would-be changers of the world. Few of them, I think, can easily have forgotten the "atrocious whistle" of the train into whose boiler captive partisans are thrown alive. But Malraux's metaphysics—ruminations on love, solitude, and sacrifice by men facing annihilation—now have a quaint accent. They remind us that a mere eighty years ago "the death of God" wasn't a graduate-school conceit but a viscerally felt void of authority and grandeur that ideology rushed to fill. Action is Malraux's cure for the "absurdity" of life in a universe without salvation. Its price is martyrdom; its solace is brotherhood; its hope lies in transcendence; and its immediate reward for the author was the Prix Goncourt, which anointed him at thirty-two as the voice of his generation.

Malraux's apotheosis also reminds us that French literature is, or used to be, a kind of priesthood responsible for administering the religion of a secular state—the sanctity of Frenchness—and that the Knights Templar of fiction, the writers who fight and the warriors who write, have always been an élite fraternity. The rise of Hitler offered Malraux a worthy crusade, and he opposed Nazism earlier, and with more vigor, than many of his contemporaries, denouncing anti-Semitism strenuously at a time when it was rife in French politics on both the left and the right. "You can say a lot of things about Malraux," Clara later said, "but not that he is anti-Semitic. And goodness knows I gave him enough cause." Malraux's anti-Fascism took the form of a high-profile solidarity with the Soviet regime, with Communist intellectuals, and with the militant German proletariat. He never joined the Party, and briefly entertained a quixotic scheme for organizing a Left Bank rescue party to liberate Trotsky from Stalin's prison in Kazakhstan. He also dissented from "the extremist evangelists of socialist realism," as Todd puts it. "It's not passion that destroys the work of art," he wrote. "It's the will to prove." On the other side of the ledger, he was prepared to overlook the murder of dissent, extolling the lethal utopianism of Russian "democracy," and he was still starstruck by Mao in the early seventies. Like so many of his contemporaries, he practiced what the political historian Tony Judt calls a system of "double-entry moral bookkeeping": "an insistence upon certain normative values" combined with "the subsequent refusal to recognize their application in selected cases."

The theatre of combat was a metaphor for Malraux until the start of the Spanish Civil War, in 1936, which gave his heroic persona its first live exercise on a stage. He was by then struggling to get away from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hath fed and drunk
the milk of Paradise."
—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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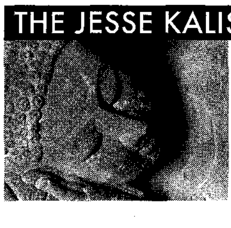
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as you know as you know

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without end as you know

in the night where you go
sleep softly my old love
without end in the dark
in the love that you know

—*W. S. Merwin*

Clara, but he was still partially dependent on her, and on her sensitive reading of his work. Despite increasingly vicious rows, they attended a writers' conference together in Madrid that spring. Josette Clotis, Malraux's pretty paramour—an aspiring writer and a Gallimard minion—also turned up, and he shuttled between a wife and a mistress who were the embodiments of his divided existence: one a *pasionaria*, the other a bourgeoise. Woman's fate or hope, however, was never of much interest to Malraux. Once Josette got him to herself, which is to say, lost his attention, she suffered from "the strange Asian manners of this famously cold man, this edgy, sanguinary fiend, of whom," she wrote in her diary, "there is no proof that he was not slightly homosexual."

The right-wing generals, led by Franco, staged their coup in July of that year, and Malraux hastened to offer his unhumble services to a country whose art, blood sport, and machismo he had always found congenial. A reconnaissance trip to Madrid on behalf of the French aviation minister persuaded Malraux that the government's most urgent strategic need was for planes. He set about procuring aircraft and recruiting pilots, and was rewarded with the rank of lieutenant colonel in the republican air force and command of the España squadron (later renamed for Malraux), a colorful unit of volunteers and mercenaries who kitted themselves out in Mexican cowboy gear—neckerchiefs and sombreros. They flew some twenty-three valiant though futile missions, and on an unspecified number of them their debonair colonel manned the gun bay, supposedly reciting Corneille above the din of ordnance and propellers.

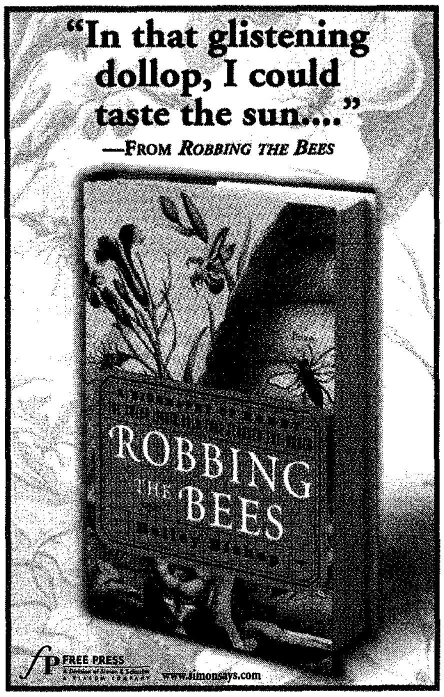
The squadron was based at an airfield near Madrid, and nearly every afternoon Malraux made a well-groomed cocktail-hour appearance at the Hotel Florida—the watering hole of choice for spies, politicos, the foreign press, black marketeers, and anti-Fascist luminaries like John Dos Passos (still a leftist at the time) and Pablo Neruda. He was mobbed by the smitten of both sexes, but at least one barfly wasn't among the spellbound. Jean Lacouture, in an admiring biography of Malraux, published in 1973, observes that Hemingway respected him without affection and listened morosely to the windy monologues on literature and politics while staring at his glass and waiting to get a word in. "Man's Hope," he cracked later, was a "*materpisse*." Malraux's egregious vanity made him an irresistible target for a cool shot like Hemingway to take down, and his courage seems to have come in spasms, like his tics. But he spent 1938 in besieged Catalonia, directing a searing feature, "Sierra de Teruel"—adapted from his novel—that was filmed as the bombs rained down.

Malraux lived high and lay low for most of the Second World War. As he said to various recruiters, he was tired of fighting "for lost causes," a telling remark from an inveterately shrewd and lucky gambler who won, for the most part, betting long odds. In February of 1940, Josette announced that she was pregnant (their first son was born that November, and their second in 1943), and two months later Malraux was drafted into the Army. As a thirty-nine-year-old reservist, he could easily have avoided active duty, but he pulled strings to get himself mustered in as a foot soldier under the pseudonym Georges André, hoping eventually to join a tank division, like his father. The rout and surrender of the French forces that June ended his eventless career as a regular soldier, and he spent the succeeding months in the rustic cocoon of captivity, with Grosjean. There was plenty to eat, the warmth of comradeship, and his fellow-prisoners took over his share of the manual labor so that he could write. Josette managed to visit him, and so did his half brother Roland, who was active in the Maquis, and who urged him to escape while he could, because the Germans were looking for anti-Fascist literary celebrities.

Having broken definitively with Clara, Malraux made his way to the Riviera, and for the next two and a half years he lived a domesticated life in the free zone with Josette. When Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir came to visit, she was shocked by the luxury of the appointments (a manservant in white gloves served a "lavish" chicken dinner). If Malraux, unlike Sartre, took pride in being one of the few writers who refused to publish a word in the Occupation or Vichy press, he was also one of the few who could afford not to. Until the Germans occupied the free zone, Malraux's American publisher was able to send him dollars, and Gaston Gallimard took charge of liquidating pieces from Malraux's art collection—some ancient, some contemporary, provenance unspecified. On a clandestine trip to a ravenous, freezing Paris in the winter of 1943, Malraux managed to dine with Josette at both Prunier and La Tour d'Argent, arriving "incognito" in a noirish overcoat. According to Todd, he had asked Clara for a divorce, but—odiously, under the circumstances—refused her bargain to give him one if he let her leave for America with the half-Jewish daughter whom he never went to visit. Lacouture suggests that he consented to stay married, despite Josette's nagging, in order to help protect his wife and daughter, though it isn't clear why the resourceful Clara needed his permission to flee. Like Malraux's two half brothers, she joined the Resistance. But it was only in March of 1944, after Claude and Roland were both arrested, that Malraux decided to become a partisan, assuming his favorite starting position: the inside rail. Though no superior had promoted him, he called himself Colonel Berger, and announced, as if the war had just begun—or he had declared it—"When one has written what I've written, one fights."

Malraux's subsequent accounts of his "years" (eleven months) of living dangerously—the clandestine missions, parachute drops, prison escapes, high-level contacts with London, unification of the Maquis, feats of morale-building, ambush and capture by the Germans, rescue by a commando squad, retrieval of bazookas stashed in the Lascaux caves, and of his adoring men chanting "Berger! Berger!"—belong to a genre that didn't yet exist: docudrama. Some scenes had a basis in reality, and many were fabricated or embroidered, but in all of them Mme. Malraux's ugly little boy, dashingly costumed, got to play the *beau rôle*. One would love to know if Malraux felt any shame or scruple about his mendacity, but Todd—a superlative detective—doesn't pose the question. He is keen on Malraux's secrets and incurious about his mystery. The Resistance chapters have an archetypal ending, however, as adventure stories for boys—their version of "Cinderella"—often do: the pretender becomes the hero he impersonates. In the final stages of the war, Colonel Berger took command of some seventeen hundred men in the improvised Alsace-Lorraine Brigade and helped lead them to victory against crack German troops in some of the last actions against the Nazis, including the battle for Strasbourg.

Malraux emerged from the war wreathed in glory—he received the Croix de Guerre—but Death seems to have rebuffed his showing off by maliciously choosing nearly anyone else named Malraux for the team. His grandfather had fallen down the stairs, perhaps drunk. His father, embroiled in romantic and financial intrigues, had committed suicide. Claude was captured by the Germans, and presumably tortured before he was shot. Roland was captured and died on a German prison ship that was strafed by the R.A.F. Josette, who had started using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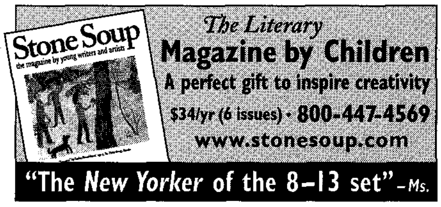
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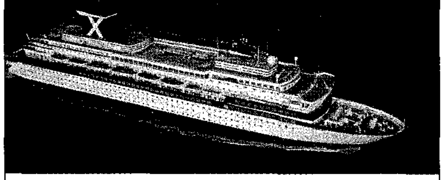

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her lover's name, took her mother to a train station while Malraux was fighting in Alsace, and was run over by a locomotive. And, seventeen years later, Malraux's two sons, Gauthier and Vincent, were killed together in a car accident—the cruellest of ironic twists to their father's ideal of brotherhood *hasta la muerte.*

Malraux had several consorts after Josette: his second wife, Madeleine, a pianist, and the widow of his brother Roland; the aristocratic woman of letters Louise de Vilmorin, an old flame; and, finally, Sophie, Louise's self-effacing niece. Sophie devoted her life to the private needs of a public man in his waning years, who, according to Todd, suffered from depression and alcoholism, and was dependent on amphetamines and sleeping pills. Fatherhood was not Malraux's forte, and his grandiosity never appears so monstrous as in his relations with his children and his nephew/stepson, Alain. When Florence, a beauty, was eighteen, her father warned her that "all the men who court you will just be trying to get to me." Alain was mysteriously banished from the presence of the uncle he called his papa one day after lunch with no warning and, apparently, no provocation.

In August of 1945, Charles de Gaulle summoned Malraux for an interview, and, in thirty minutes of lofty discussion about history, philosophy, and literature, he discreetly confessed the apostate of his Marxist sins. Malraux repented and was reborn. He served his new god with the fidelity of a convert through two administrations (1945-46; 1958-1969), in successively august capacities: adviser on cultural affairs, minister of information, and minister of culture. With Malraux at his right, the place of honor at the Cabinet table, the General felt "shielded from the commonplace," he wrote. Malraux took stock of his country's aesthetic patrimony, and his ministry both conserved and enriched it. He left a legacy of meticulously restored historic monuments; founded the Orchestre de Paris; installed Maillol's sculptures in the Jardin du Carrousel; revitalized the Marais; and embarked on an ambitious project, only partially realized, to establish regional arts centers in every department. French republicanism has flourished by assimilating aspects of the religion it overthrew, and Malraux's *maisons de la culture* had an evangelical mission: to propagate among the people what Malraux called his true faith, the religion of art, and "to get the geniuses of mankind, and particularly those of France, loved."

Malraux's ministry, though, sometimes subsidized unlovably subversive work. When Genet's play "Les Paravents" was attacked by conservatives as "anti-French," Malraux rose to its defense by pointing out that it was—far less objectionably from a Gaullist point of view—"anti-human" and "anti-everything." His attitude to Genet, like de Gaulle's to him, was rooted in the transcendent value that he and de Gaulle attached to national glory, a value tacitly shared by the signers of the petition that had certified the promise of a convicted tomb raider. A genius working in his mother tongue simply couldn't be anti-French; it didn't much matter what he said.

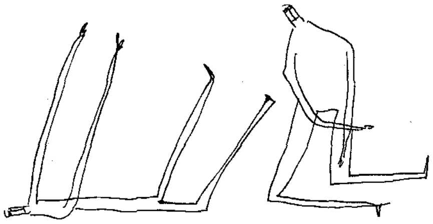
Todd is knowledgeable and amusing about the palace intrigues of the Fifth Republic, and about Malraux's travels as "a multiclient sales rep in literature, action, and politics for the firm of Gaullism, Inc." It was in that capacity that Malraux went to Washington in 1962, where he was fêted by an infatuated Jacqueline Kennedy. He repaid her hospitality with a rash, princely promise that horrified the curators of the Louvre but proved to be one of his great publicity coups: the unprecedented loan of the Mona Lisa.

The Algerian crisis tested Malraux's Gaullism, and he found himself, in some discomfort, on the other side of colonial issues that he had espoused passionately in his youth. The right mistrusted his conversion and the left considered him a turncoat, yet his writing continued to be widely admired. (Having ceased to produce fiction, perhaps because he wasn't living any, he had turned to memoir and art history.) Malraux may have nursed an ambition to succeed de Gaulle—he spread the rumor that in a secret will the General had designated him a successor—but the victors of the world see themselves through their opponents' eyes, and Malraux's were finally too avid for approval, innocent of discretion, and clouded by self-regard. Yet there is something about him for which only the word "noble" will do. Malraux was the hero of a tragicomic battle that nearly all of us know and most of us lose: "man's struggle," as he calls it, "against humiliation." ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

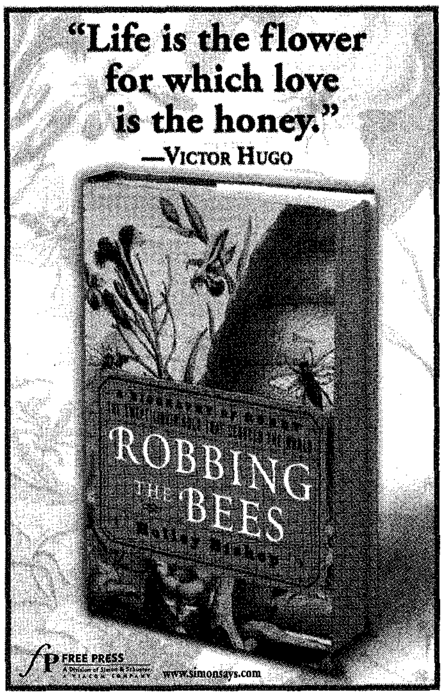
The Position, *by Meg Wolitzer (Scribner; $24).* Wolitzer's novel of sexual politics and family farce continues in the dark comic vein that she mined in "The Wife." In the nineteen-seventies, at the height of the sexual revolution, a married couple, aptly named Mellow, publish a liberated sex manual that features pictures of themselves and includes a sexual position—"Electric Forgiveness"—that they claim to have invented. The manual becomes an epochal best-seller. The publication, decades later, of a new edition of the notorious classic is a catalyst for a plot that examines the effects of this legacy on the adult children of the Mellows, who are now divorced. These effects are variously hilarious, disabling, painful, embarrassing, and, ultimately, empowering. Wolitzer's comic timing never wavers, and she has an astute grasp of the way one generation's liberation inspires the next generation's pity.

Lighthousekeeping, *by Jeanette Winterson (Harcourt; $23).* In her sea-soaked and hypnotic eighth novel, Winterson turns the tale of an orphaned young girl and a blind old man into a fable about love and the power of storytelling. Silver, abandoned after the death of her mother in the Scottish town of Salts—a "rock-bitten, sand-edged shell of a town"—is taken in by Pew, a yarn-spinning lighthouse keeper "as old as a unicorn." In the darkness of the lighthouse, he tells never-ending stories about the tortured life of a nineteenth-century clergyman, formerly a minister in Salts, and gradually, it seems, Silver contributes stories of her own. Atmospheric and elusive, Winterson's high-modernist excursion is an inspired meditation on myth and language.



Mistress Bradstreet, *by Charlotte Gordon (Little, Brown; $27.95).* Of the thousand people who came to America from England between April and December, 1630, two hundred died of starvation or illness by the end of the year, and another two hundred returned as quickly as possible to England. Anne Bradstreet, who published America's first book of poetry, was among the survivors. Bradstreet began writing poetry while recovering from a nearly lethal bout of smallpox, and the immediacy of death was one of her greatest subjects. A poem called "Before the Birth of One of Her Children" begins, "All things within this fading world hath end, / Adversity doth still our joys attend." Gordon's animated biography is exhaustively researched, but there's a limit to how much can be known for certain about Bradstreet. Faced with this limitation, Gordon resorts to a portrait of Puritan life at the time, taking, for example, a full page to describe how to butcher and brine a pig.

Three Nights in August, *by Buzz Bissinger (Houghton Mifflin; $25).* Bissinger, whose "Friday Night Lights" celebrated high-school football in Texas, here explores baseball through the eyes of the St. Louis Cardinals' current manager, Tony La Russa. A three-game series against the Chicago Cubs in 2003 frames the narrative, and provides an opportunity to explore the quirks of the contemporary game; clubhouses offer four flavors of sunflower seeds, for instance, while a Cardinals' relief pitcher performs his pre-game rituals in the nude. La Russa comes across as a passionate, conflicted man. He's an animal-rights activist who drives an Escalade, and an information omnivore prone to misusing baseball statistics; and, while he's the sixth-winningest manager in history, he still gets so upset about losing that he has been known to stomp off the team bus and walk in solitude back to his hotel after a defeat. Granted complete access to La Russa and the team, Bissinger has studied closely, but he betrays a weakness for platitude and for odd turns of phrase, as when he ascribes to one hitter "the slightest oregano of arrogance."


"Life is the flower for which love is the honey."
—Victor Hugo

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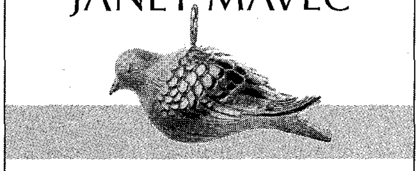

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THE SKY LINE

GREEN MONSTER

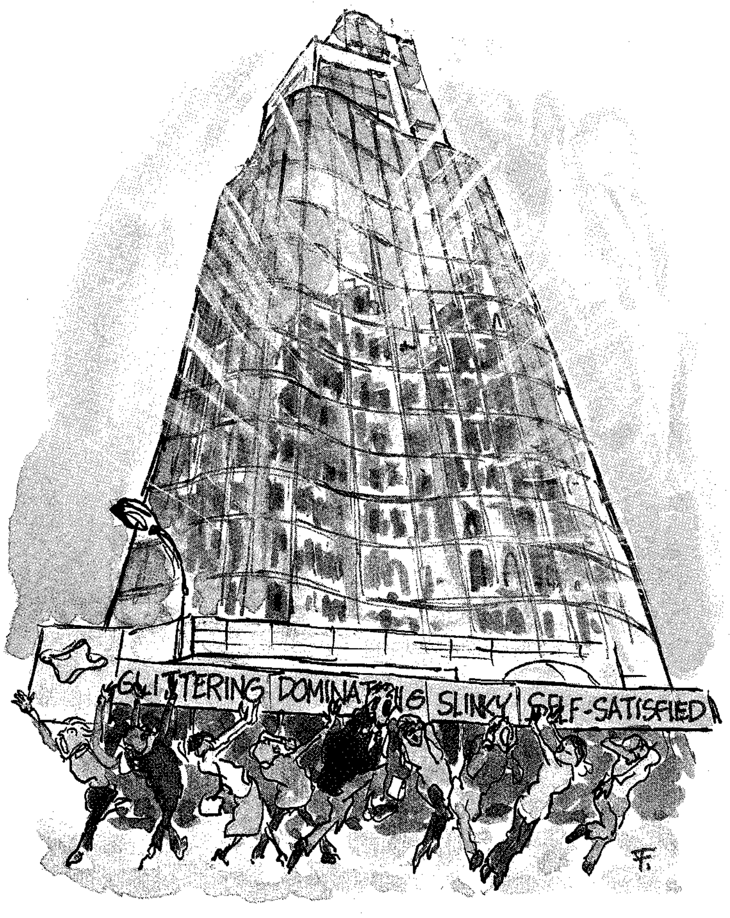
A startling addition to Astor Place.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

The first thing you think when you see the new luxury apartment building at Astor Place—a slick, undulating tower clad in sparkly green glass—is that it doesn't belong in the neighborhood. The tone of Astor Place is set by places like Cooper Union, the Public Theatre, and the gargantuan former Wanamaker store on Broadway: heavy, brawny blocks of masonry that sit foursquare on the ground. Louis Sullivan once described one of Henry Hobson Richardson's great stone buildings as a man with "virile force—broad, vigorous, and with a whelm of energy." The new building, designed by Charles Gwathmey, is an elf prancing among men.

Of course, cities are often enriched by architecture that seems, at first, to be alien: the pristine glass towers of Mies van der Rohe and the sylphlike bridges of Santiago Calatrava have brought grace to countless harsh, older cityscapes. But this new building, which is on one of the most prominent sites in lower Manhattan, does not have a transforming effect. If, as Vincent Scully proposed, architecture is a conversation between generations, this young intruder hasn't much to say to its neighbors. Its shape is fussy, and the glass façade is garishly reflective: Mies van der Rohe as filtered through Donald Trump. Instead of adding a lyrical counterpoint to Astor Place, the tower disrupts the neighborhood's rhythm.

In an inelegant way, Gwathmey's building has exposed a truth about this part of lower Manhattan: inside those rough-and-tumble old masonry buildings is a lot of wealth. By designing a tower with such a self-conscious shimmer, the architect has destroyed the illusion that this neighborhood, which underwent gentrification long ago, is now anything other than a place for the rich. The thirty-nine apartments inside the Gwathmey building start at two million dollars.



In Gwathmey's design, Mies van der Rohe meets Donald Trump.

JULES FEIFFER

It is a paradox of the New York real-estate market that nothing breeds gentility like harsh surroundings. Once, it all happened indoors—grimy factory floors in SoHo became expensive lofts. Sleekness was a private pleasure, not a public display. But the pair of exceptionally elegant glass towers designed by Richard Meier that went up on the western reaches of Greenwich Village a few years ago changed the rules. High-gloss modernism, preferably attached to the signature of a famous architect and dropped into an old industrial streetscape, became the hottest thing in Manhattan apartment architecture since Emery Roth invented the foyer.

Gwathmey was asked to design the tower soon after Meier's buildings were completed. The land on which Gwathmey's new building sits is owned by Cooper Union, whose main building is right across the street. It used to be a dreary parking lot. Cooper Union tried for years to build something noteworthy on the site, coming up with several ambitious schemes—several years ago, Rem Koolhaas, collaborating with Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, designed a striking, angular boutique hotel—but none came to fruition. Eventually, Stephen Ross, the head of Related Companies, who built the Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle, took over and commissioned Gwathmey to create a small, sophisticated apartment tower that would attract the same kind of people who had bought apartments in Meier's buildings—people who were tired of living on Park Avenue, or who might otherwise have settled in Tribeca lofts but would be tempted by sexier views and architectural glamour.

What architect wouldn't want to design a building here? Gwathmey's site, at the corner of Astor Place and Lafayette Street, is nearly as free and open as that of the Flatiron Building. Framed by streets on three sides, it faces a large, open intersection containing one of the city's best-known pieces of public sculpture: Tony Rosenthal's black cube, "Alamo." The site dominates this part of downtown the way the Plaza anchors the southeast corner of Central Park.

Gwathmey responded to this opportunity with a piecemeal design: a four-layer cake. A chunky trapezoidal base is topped by a twenty-one-story section of curved glass; above this rests a boxy minitower, which is crowned by another curved section. For a while, the base of the building was surrounded by scaffolding on which was painted the words "SCULPTURE FOR LIVING—UNDULATING, PROVOCATIVE, REFLECTIVE, ICONIC, CURVACEOUS," which is surely a more sophisticated approach to marketing than "4 RMS RIVER VU," even if it left you wondering whether it referred to a condominium or a stripper.

As the marketing campaign suggests, Gwathmey was less interested in fitting in than in stopping people in their tracks. He wanted to make freestanding sculpture. That, in itself, was a good idea, especially at a time when so many New York apartment buildings are knockoffs of prewar brick boxes, based on the idea that blending in is the greatest virtue. At least Gwathmey is above that. At one point, he told me that the building was inspired by Mies van der Rohe's famous unbuilt designs for a curving glass skyscraper. Yet the architect didn't follow Mies enough. He put Mies in the middle, but not at the bottom, where the squat limestone base tries too hard to fit into the surrounding streets, or at the top, with its crown of miniboxes.

Furthermore, the highly reflective glass the architect chose is inexplicable. It is the sort of pastel hue you would expect to see in a suburban office park. There's no need for that today, when glass manufacturers are able to produce clear, almost colorless glass that is as energy-efficient as older, reflective varieties. The green glass contrasts baldly with the white limestone masonry, further fragmenting the façade and making the whole structure look like a catalogue of architectural parts.

A peculiar aspect of glass buildings is that they almost always look better when they are surrounded by something else. The Seagram Building seemed a lot more elegant when it had masonry buildings all around it on Park Avenue; so did Lever House. They felt like diamonds in the rough. That's actually a good metaphor for a certain kind of urban building. Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, in Bilbao, and his Walt Disney Concert Hall, in Los Angeles, respond brilliantly to their neighbors by subtly playing off the shapes surrounding them. And diamond in the rough certainly describes Meier's towers, which have an almost ephemeral lightness, and rise gently amid the uneven jumble of the West Village.

Gwathmey has long been noted for his carefully detailed modernist houses and interiors. He and his partner, Robert Siegel, are the architects whom people like Steven Spielberg and Jerry Seinfeld hire for a kind of design that is expertly crafted, staggeringly expensive, and not particularly avant-garde. The apartment units at Astor Place were designed by Gwathmey Siegel in association with the architect Ismael Leyva. The spiffy baths and kitchens, designed by the master himself, are prêt-à-porter Gwathmey, remarkably close to those he creates for custom clients. Every apartment has at least three exposures, and most units have a spectacular section of curving glass wall. These are assertive, sensual spaces that evoke the classic modernist houses of Le Corbusier, who in the late nineteen-twenties began experimenting with romantic curves as a counterpoint to straight lines. (Think of his famous leather chaise.) Being inside one of Gwathmey's living rooms feels, delightfully, like being inside an enormous, transparent grand piano.

The beauty of the interiors, however, only underscores the failings of the exterior. Gwathmey hasn't done many high-rises; he is more comfortable on a small scale. He thrives on intricacy, and that skill doesn't always translate to New York City streets. Gwathmey's building doesn't rise quietly—it thrashes about. It's as if he believed that its complex shape and its eye-popping glass would somehow provide a strong counterpunch to the powerful surrounding architecture. The diamonds in the rough that succeed are all, in one way or another, serene. There is an almost Zen-like quality to Meier's towers. Gwathmey's building is hyperactive. It alludes to Mies and it tries to be a sculptural marker and it tries to fit into the complex streetscape, all at the same time. This building could have been one of the best new buildings in New York—if only the architect had kept it simple. ♦

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MUSICAL EVENTS

THE KING OF SPAIN

Jordi Savall at the Metropolitan Museum.

BY ALEX ROSS

When the Catalan viol player Jordi Savall presented three concerts at the Metropolitan Museum earlier this month, one musical border after another seemed to melt away—borders between past and present, composition and improvisation, "popular" and "classical," East and West. Centuries-old songs and dances glowed with sadness and jumped for joy. The sounds of a dozen different nations and three world religions consorted in a richly believable utopia. Savall's first program opened with a trio of far-flung pieces: "Quantas Sabedes Amare," a *cantiga* by the thirteenth-century Galician poet Martin Codax; "Nastaran," an instrumental piece from Afghanistan in the *naghma* genre; and "Noumi, Noumi Yaldatii," a Hebrew lullaby. Later in the performance, Savall pointed out that the music of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish cultures often features similar or even identical melodic shapes. As he illustrated with a few phrases on his viola da gamba, a sentimental vision of global unity acquired heartbreaking force.

The Met called the series "Celebrating Jordi Savall," and, amid the usual parade of famous, anonymous maestros, here, finally, was a man worth celebrating. Savall is not only a performer of genius but also a conductor, a scholar, a teacher, a concert impresario (he founded the Hespèrion XXI, Le Concert des Nations, and La Capella Reial de Catalunya ensembles, all of which accompanied him to New York), a record-label director (his is called Alia Vox), a minor film personality (he played on the soundtrack of the 1991 movie "Tous les Matins du Monde"), and the patriarch of a formidable musical family. He was born in Barcelona in 1941, and still lives in the area. With his wavy mane and courtly beard, he could pass for one of El Greco's more debonair Spanish knights. Part of his mission is to restore the splendor of Iberian musical traditions, which have long been disparaged by the Teutonic mind-set of the classical world. Appropriately enough, Savall performed two of his concerts in the Medieval Sculpture Hall, in front of the great choir screen from Valladolid Cathedral, where King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella were married, in 1469.

Savall makes the viola da gamba sing. Photograph by Jason Schmidt.

The ancestry of the viola da gamba, or viol, can be traced to Central Asia, where bowed string instruments were first observed in the tenth century. Viol-like instruments appeared in Moorish Spain not long afterward. (Perhaps this is why Savall placed a *naghma* piece at the beginning of his series.) The viol looks like an ancestor of the cello, but it has more in common with the guitar or the lute. It is much lighter in construction, so that even the softest tones resonate handsomely, and its strings lie flatter on the bridge, so that a single stroke of the bow can produce rich chords. On the debit side, the viol has a hard time making itself heard in a large ensemble, which is why the more muscular cello began to supersede it in the Baroque period.

No one plays this eccentric, eloquent instrument more beautifully than Savall. Minute details of phrasing, dynamics, and timbre join together in an endlessly varied singing line. The constant interweaving of melody and chords has a pronounced hypnotic effect, as Savall and friends prove on classic recordings of such masterworks as John Dowland's "Lachrimae," William Lawes's Consort Sets, and the Pièces de Viole by Marin Marais and his teacher, Sainte Colombe (the lead characters in "Tous les Matins du Monde"). Anyone who thinks that the music of several centuries ago is less emotionally immediate than the modern product needs to hear a few of these disks. The Dowland, in particular, should have been packaged with appropriate medication: "Lachrimae" was published in the same year as the Second Quarto of "Hamlet," and it goes to the brink of the same abyss.

Savall has recaptured, as far as anyone can tell, not just the technique but also the artistic spirit of the Renaissance musicians who made the viol the center of their world. One of his guiding lights is a treatise published in 1553 by Diego Ortiz, a composer-performer from

Toledo, which shows the novice gambist how to embroider a given melody or chord progression with ornaments, variations, and outright inventions. It is an art of controlled improvisation, closer to jazz than to modern classical composition. Richard Taruskin, in his monumental new history of music, describes such instructional treatises as glimpses of a “great submerged iceberg of sound”—everything about the musical past that dots and lines on parchment do not preserve.

From the beginning, Savall has been lucky to find musicians who share the disciplined freedom of his style. His most important collaborator is the soprano Montserrat Figueras, to whom he has been married for thirty-seven years. She, too, looks beyond the cold facts of notation to grasp the spirit of the age: her smoky, penetrating, flatly expressive voice falls somewhere between grand opera and rural folksinging, and combines the best aspects of both. The other dominant presence in Savall’s smaller ensembles is the percussionist Pedro Estevan, whose technique runs the gamut from traditional Spanish folk music to Senegalese drumming and the European avant-garde. A heavily bearded man who slightly resembles Professor Dumbledore in “Harry Potter,” he contributes pattering polyrhythms, swaggering martial beats, and crisp splashes of tambourine. Whether anything like this racily smooth, head-nodding sound was heard in the background of Renaissance songs and dances is anyone’s guess, but the earthiness of Estevan’s approach rings historically true: even the courtliest European music of the Renaissance and the Baroque overlapped at every turn with the music of the streets.

Savall’s two concerts in the Medieval Sculpture Hall provided a rough map of his world. One, with the players of Le Concert des Nations, presented a sumptuous portrait of court music of the Baroque: the ballet given for Louis XIII in 1627, excerpts from Purcell’s “Fairy Queen,” Rameau’s “Les Indes Galantes.” The other was an almost purely domestic affair, with Savall and Figueras joined by their children Arianna and Ferran. Arianna plays the harp and sings in a light, pure voice; she has released a record under her own name. Ferran has studied the theorbo, or bass lute, and has also taken up singing, not in early-music circles but in jazz clubs around Barcelona. With the addition of Arianna and Ferran’s pop-inflected songs to the music of Spain, Greece, Israel, Afghanistan, and so on, the program became mentally hard to navigate; as a friend commented, the border between early music and smooth jazz is one that should perhaps remain intact. But it was a thrill to watch this extraordinary family making music together. During the slower stretches, I imagined a Savall Family sitcom: “But, Dad, I don’t want to play theorbo!”

The final event in the series, with the players of Le Concert des Nations and the singers of La Capella Reial, was an overwhelming experience, the concert of the year. It took place at the Temple of Dendur, where the Met presents music several times each season. Savall chose the theme “Music and Songs of War and Love,” with vocal works by Monteverdi predominating: the mini-opera “Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda,” in which the baritone Furio Zanasi gave a happily blood-curdling performance; “Tirsi e Clori,” with Arianna Savall again; and, the ne plus ultra, Monteverdi’s time-stopping madrigal “Lamento della Ninfa,” with instrumentals by Marini and Rossi providing a sombre frame. Figueras drenched the vocal line with her wine-dark tone; Andrew Lawrence-King offered piercing embroidery on the harp; and Savall somehow remained the master of the scene even as he confined himself to four repeating notes. That one quarter hour of music was as good as it gets, and I became downcast in the middle, because I realized that it had to end.

Even amid the prevailing gloom, the spirit of the dance was present throughout. By finishing up with Juan Arañés’s 1624 *chacona* “A La Vida Bona,” which can be heard on Alia Vox’s unofficial dance-party CD, “Villancicos y Danzas Criollas,” Savall reminded us that certain of Monteverdi’s gravely expressive bass lines echoed the sensual dances that the conquistadores brought back from the New World. Estevan banged out fat beats on his big green drum, and the circle of Savall’s world was complete. ♦

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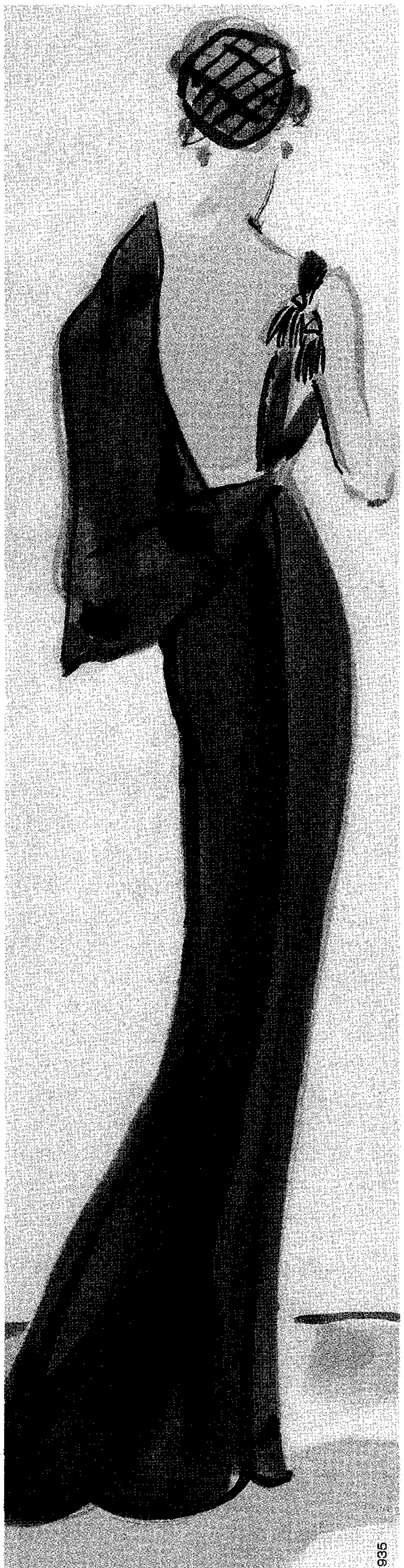

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

ANGRY PEOPLE

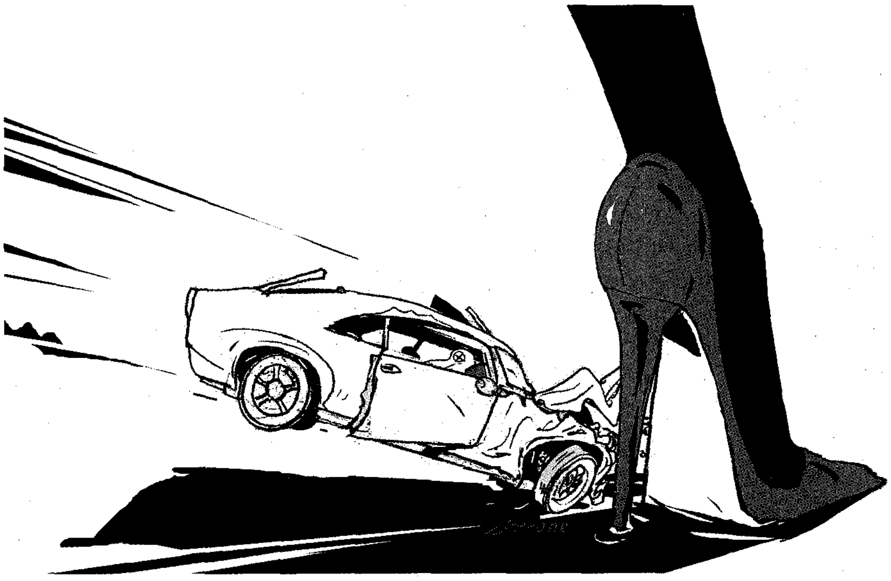
"Crash."

BY DAVID DENBY

If there's an ill-tempered remark that has ever been uttered in the city of Los Angeles that hasn't found its way into Paul Haggis's "Crash," I can't imagine what it is. "Crash" (opening May 6th) is about the rage and foolishness produced by intolerance, the mutual abrasions of white, black, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Asian citizens in an urban pot in which nothing melts. The characters run afoul of each other, say things better left unsaid, and get into terrible trouble. And yet the movie isn't exasperating in the way that movies about steam-heated people often are. "Crash" is hyper-articulate and often breathtakingly intelligent and always brazenly alive. I think it's easily the strongest American film since Clint Eastwood's "Mystic River," though it is not for the faint-hearted. In the first twenty minutes or so, the racial comments are so blunt and the dialogue so incisive that you may want to shield yourself from the daggers flying across the screen by getting up and leaving. That would be a mistake. "Crash" stretches the boundaries: after the cantankerous early scenes, it pulls us into the multiple stories it has to tell and becomes intensely moving.

Like other recent movies set in Los Angeles ("Grand Canyon," "Short Cuts," "Magnolia"), the picture is structured in vignette form, a natural dramatic outgrowth of a strange automotive paradise in which people live in separate racial and class enclaves, drive to work, and stick with their own. "We're always behind this metal and glass," a melancholy police detective, Graham (Don Cheadle), says as he sits in his car with his partner and girlfriend, Ria (Jennifer Esposito). "It's the sense of touch. I think we miss that touch so much that we crash into each other just so we can feel something." This may seem a fancy conceit until one realizes that Haggis is pushing the word "crash" beyond the literal: he means any kind of rough contact between folks from different ethnic groups. But after the collision, what then? The stories, which begin on separate paths, slowly mesh; the characters are thrown together in bizarre ways, and they go past their initial distaste for each other and at least admit that they live in the same city, and are touched by the same fatality and magic.

Paul Haggis, who is fifty-two, was born in Canada; he crossed the border into the land of dreams and folly in his early twenties. For many years, he worked successfully in American television, and was responsible for, among other things, the short-lived but much-appreciated series "EZ Streets." A few years ago, Haggis, working with his friend Bobby Moresco, wrote the screenplay for "Crash" on spec. Most writers who have been around as long as Haggis wouldn't write anything—not even a thank-you note—on spec, but the virtues of working this way are obvious enough: "Crash" was created freely, without the usual anxieties that shape big-budget films. The screenplay then attracted a number of people eager to take some chances, including the star, Don Cheadle, who helped raise a production budget of $6.5 million, which is roughly one-tenth the budget of the average Hollywood studio feature. Yet "Crash" doesn't look small. Haggis, in his first outing as director, has put together an extraordinary cast, and the stories are set high and low, in Brentwood and the ghetto, among cops and civilians, the young and the decrepit elderly.



In Paul Haggis's Los Angeles, no one is entirely innocent or entirely guilty.

"Crash" begins with out-of-focus lights, moving in the dark, as if a stunned post-collision consciousness were slowly coming back into focus. The time is Christmas, a very cold Christmas for Los Angeles, with dreamy flakes of snow in the air. At the side of the road the police are investigating a shooting; a young black man has been killed. Cheadle's detective examines the crime scene and stares at something in horror. The movie then goes back to the previous afternoon and fills in the events leading up to Cheadle's unhappy moment. Two young African-Americans, Anthony (the rapper Chris "Ludacris" Bridges) and Peter (Larenz Tate), argue merrily on the street. Anthony is convinced that everything in his life, including the large windows on Los Angeles buses, is part of a white plot to humiliate blacks. His friend tries to tease him out of it. The real joke, however, is that Anthony, who rants that whites assume that all young black men are thugs, actually is a thug, and when he and Peter spy a prosperous white couple walking down the street to their Lincoln Navigator, they jump them, at gunpoint, and take off in the car.

The couple, it turns out, are the Los Angeles district attorney (Brendan Fraser) and his spoiled-bitch Brentwood wife (Sandra Bullock). At home after the incident, the young D.A. complains hysterically that the incident, which is sure to become public, may lose him either the black vote or the law-and-order vote, and his wife, who saw trouble coming, is mad because people might think she's a racist. Later the same evening, a prosperous black couple, Cameron (Terrence Howard) and Christine (Thandie Newton), are out on the town. A little drunk, Christine performs a companionable sex act on her husband as he drives their own Lincoln Navigator. A white cop, Officer Ryan (Matt Dillon), who's got a heavy case of L.A.P.D. malaise—he knows he's a racist but can't suppress it—pulls them over, even though it's obvious that their Navigator isn't the stolen one. As his partner (Ryan Phillippe) looks on in disgust, Ryan humiliates the couple, reaching up between Christine's thighs in a mock weapons search. Christine, shaken, taunts her husband for not standing up to the cops, a fight that sickens both of them, because it seems so old: the black manhood issue again. But also that night we see that Ryan's father is in terrible pain from a misdiagnosed prostate problem, and Ryan can't get a straight answer about his father's condition from the black supervisor at their H.M.O. What Ryan does to the black couple is not justified by his problems, but, as we later find out, a racist can also be a good son and a good cop.

I give so much detail about a single plot thread because the entire movie is as intricately worked as this one piece of it. Haggis's complex take on each furious encounter makes previous movie treatments of prejudice seem like easy and self-congratulatory liberalizing. Apart from a few brave scenes in Spike Lee's work, "Crash" is the first movie I know of to acknowledge not only that the intolerant are also human but, further, that something like white fear of black street crime, or black fear of white cops, isn't always irrational. In another strand, an Iranian shopkeeper named Farhad (Shaun Toub) has become a quarrelsome fool; he's sure that everyone is out to cheat him. But this incensed man's neighbors think that he and his family are Arabs, and trash his store. In Haggis's Los Angeles, the tangle of mistrust, misunderstanding, and foul temper envelops everyone; no one is entirely innocent or entirely guilty.

"Crash" could have turned into an exploding nebula, the superheated pieces flying off into dramatic irrelevance (as they do in many of Lee's movies), but Haggis has imposed a tight formal organization on his narrative. He has set up parallel events and characters (two wealthy couples, two daughters who save their fathers, and so on), and also multiple echoes and variations, all of which deepen the thematic lines. Haggis sustains the temporal fiction—a long day's journey into night, then day, and then back to the film's opening moment at night—with shrewdly timed cutting among the stories and with many silent moments in which a single character, staring at the city's moving lights, falls into a brooding funk similar to Cheadle's melancholy in the first scene. The moments of rest, deepened and prolonged by Mark Isham's gentle electronic score, serve as caesuras between the high-tension scenes. There are plenty of angry people in movies and on television, but Haggis has an intimate feeling for the way rage fuels itself and redoubles—the demotic eloquence of the street, the marital quarrel, the police-station tirade. I can't think of a single flat or dramatically pointless scene, and some of the big moments play out at the edge of insanity, where contentiousness spills over into tragedy or farce.

The actors grab at their roles as if their careers depended on it. Thandie Newton and Terrence Howard expose the kind of torment and shame that could drive this educated, privileged couple apart. Cheadle's soft-spoken intelligence has become one of the most expressive elements in American cinema, and, as the man who sees the most, understands the most, and pays for his knowledge in suffering, he holds this movie together. But everyone steps up, including Matt Dillon, Sandra Bullock, and the angel-faced Ryan Phillippe, who pulls off a moment of near-calamity with character and force. The heart-swelling resolutions of the different stories will, I know, strike some viewers as overwrought. But hasn't Haggis earned the tears? He has laid the groundwork for emotional release by writing some of the toughest talk ever heard in American movies. Some things may be better left unsaid, but the exuberant frankness of this movie burns through embarrassment and chagrin and produces its own kind of exhilaration. ♦

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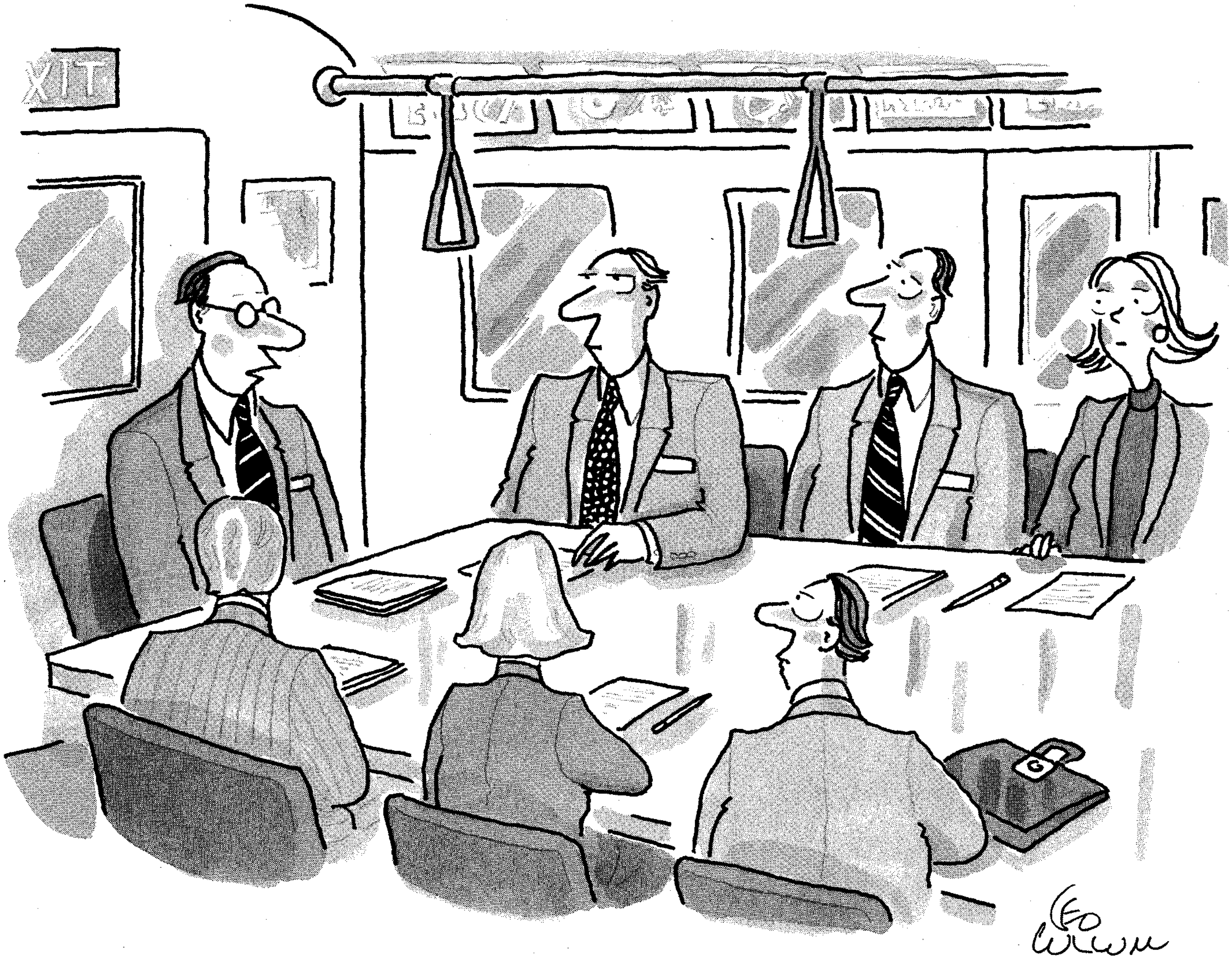
Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Once the page is in full swing, three issues from now, it will carry three cartoons, each at a different stage of the contest. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Leo Cullum, must be received by Sunday, May 1st. Finalists will appear in the May 16th issue; we will announce the winner, who will be given a signed print of the cartoon, in the May 30th issue. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com.



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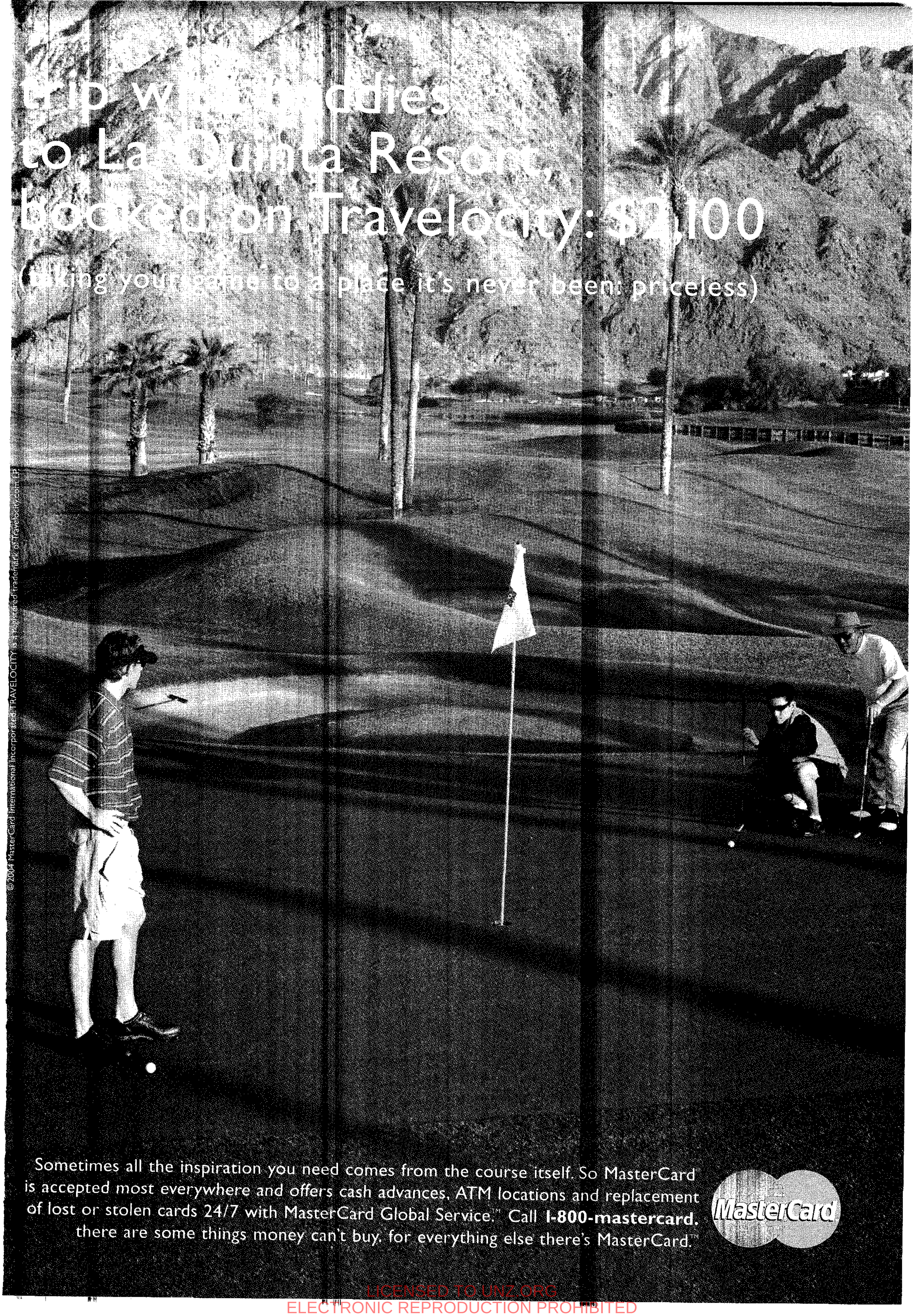
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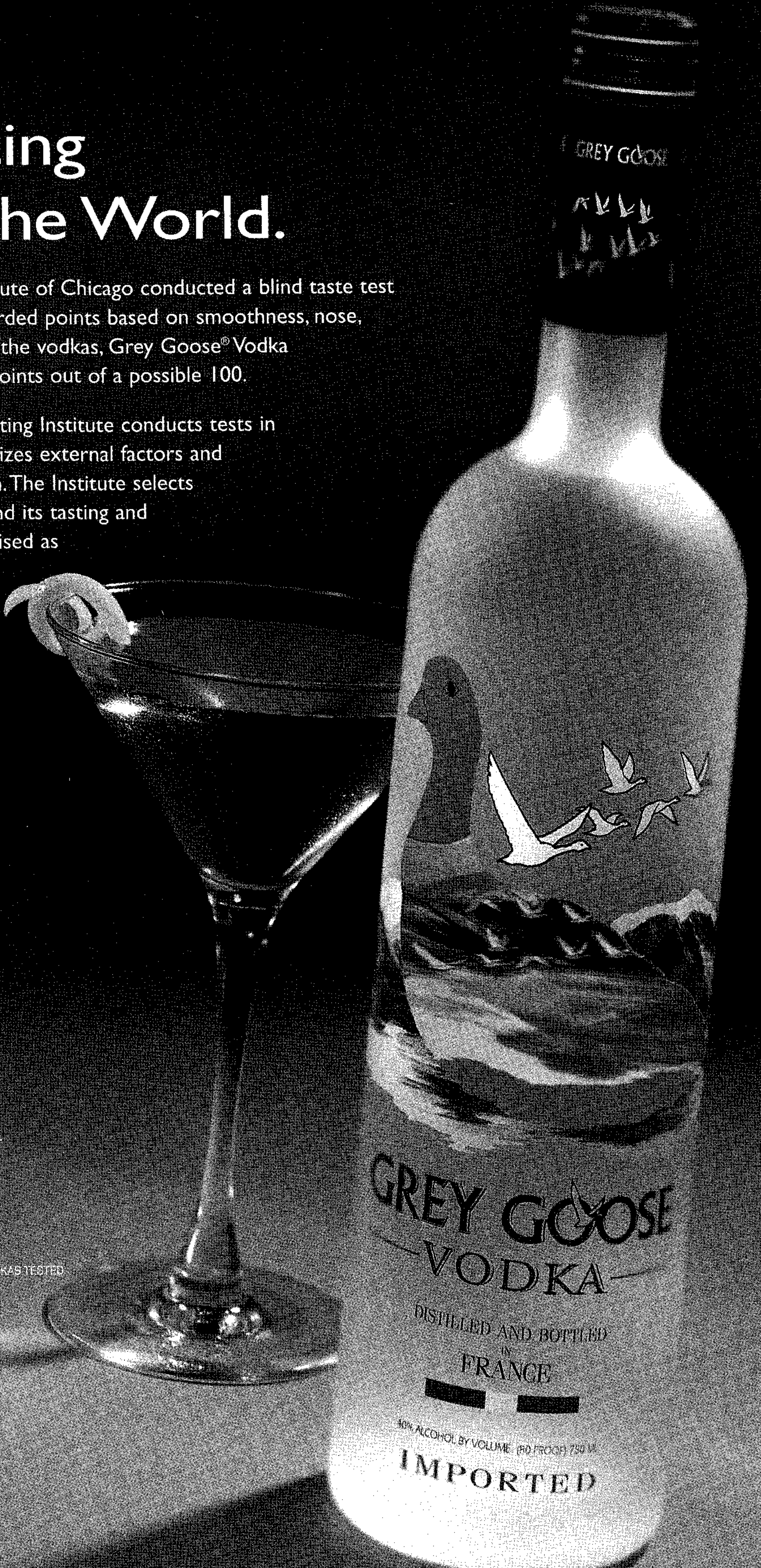
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